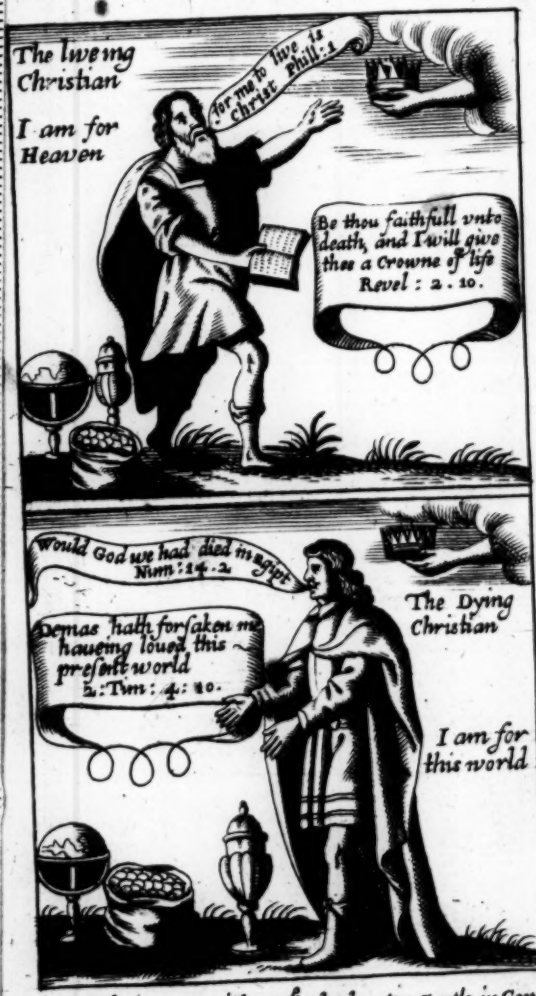

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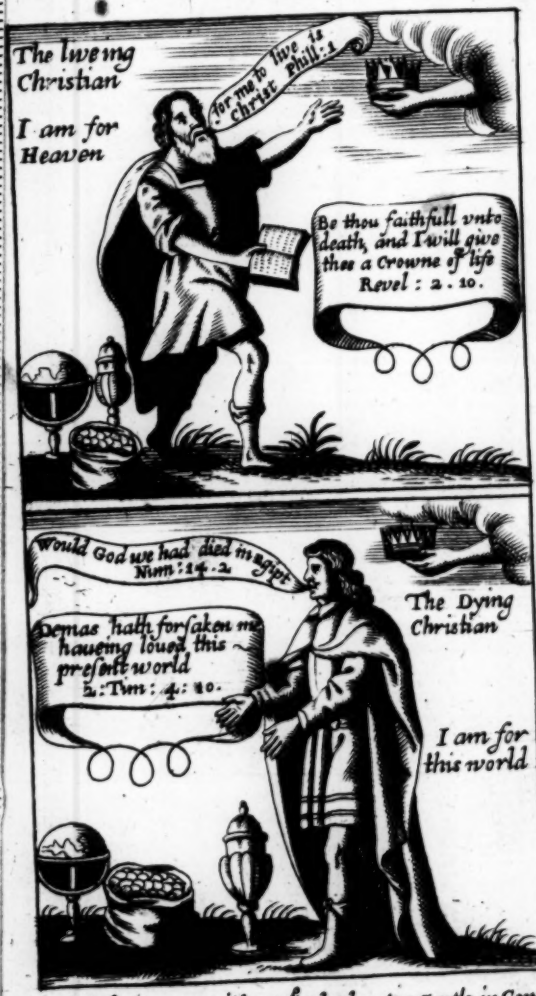

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SYMPTOMES OF *GROWTH* and *DECAY* IN GODLINESS:

IN

Eighty Signs of a Living and Dying *CHRISTIAN*, With the Causes of Decay and Remedies for Recovery.

The Second Edition much *Enlarged*, with the Addition also of *Twenty Sgns* largely Improved.

By *Francis Smith*, One that through Gods Grace, and the Deceitfulness of Sin; hath had some acquaintance with both these States.

Psal. 92. 12. *The Righteous shall flourish like a Palm tree, he shall grow like a Cedar in* Lebanon.

Rev. 3. 1. *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.*

Whether for Heaven or Hell you go,
This Book, with Heart compar'd, may show.

LONDON, Printed for *Francis Smith*, at the *Elephant* and *Castle*, neer *Temple bar*, 1673.

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EDWIN F. HATFIELD.

IMPRIMATUR

William Jeffery, *Thomas Munck,*

Benjamin Morley, *Joseph Wright.*

To the Right Worſhipful and my ever Honoured Good Friend, Sir THOMAS FOSTER *Knight: One of His Majeſties Juſtices of the Peace for the County of* Middleſex *and* Surrey.

Right Worſhipful,

UNthankfulneſs is not only a *ſin*, but it is ranked amongſt thoſe *Capital ſins*, that are *ſigns* of the *laſt times*; and hath a general mark in the holy Scriptures, not barely to *debaſe Chriſtians below Heathens*, but indeed below brute Beaſts; for *the Ox acknowledgeth his Owner, and the Aſſe his Maſters Crib.*

This Conſideration, with many more, Commands me to enquire into the truth, and greatneſs of my *Debt* to your *Worſhip*, whoſe paſt *Favours* I can mention, but never *Requite*: Yet by Gods grace and help, will *ever remember*, and *acknowledge*, where ever Occaſion ſerves, to the *day of my death.*

And becauſe your Faithful, Unmeritted, and every way Unrequited Kindneſs may live

when I am gone; not only to induce others to such Compassionate Acts of Mercy, in time of Extremity; but that my Children also may have an honourable remembrance of *Your Name* and *Deeds* to their poor once languishing *Father*, while buried alive in the worst of *English* Prisons, that they may still read over, what both their Father underwent, and your Worship relieved from, when others, sufficiently obliged, did decline; while your self neither accepting Common Acknowledgement, nor regarding the strength of Opposition, or other Reflections of being so much concerned for one wholy a stranger to your selfe, and under names of *Contempt* or *Fanaticisme*.

Yet in unwearied Indeavours after once you took the task in hand, were so far from declining, that in conjunction with *this noble Principle*, sure *God raised you up* to regard the distress of a stranger, and his poor wife and several small children: which Principle still carried you through those many oppositions that befell you: yet like a resolved Warriour, did attempt all Indeavours for a thorow Conquest of what you had once begun. And now,

Dear Sir, pardon my boldness, and please to give me leave at this time to remember you, of what in duty to God, I ought never to forget: namely, in *August* 1661. I was seized by a Warrant from the then *Secretary of State*, and committed close Prisoner to the *Gate-*

House

House Prison, upon Suggestion of Printing a Book entituled, *The year of Prodigies*: though I knew not who Printed it. There I was truly *buried alive*, it being a Prison *famous for oppression of poor Prisoners*, as many besidesmy self can notoriously witness; for as soon as I was brought thither, a *Stern Goaler* locked me up, and said, I must not see, nor have the *liberty* of any of *Relations* or acquaintance to *visit me* without special *Order* from the *Secretary* first obtained. This looked like *Cold entrance*, to one unacquainted with such a Condition; (*though I then deserved worse at Gods hands*)

But to a tittle, this and much more I found to be as truly performed as promised, for I was locked up in a Room, where I neither had Chair nor Stool to rest on, and yet ten Shillings the week must be the price: and ere I had been there three nights, seven Pounds and fifteen Shillings was demanded for present Fees; that is to say, five Pounds to free me from *wearing Irons*: ten Shillings for my Entrance week Lodging, five Shillings my Sheets, five Shillings Garnish mony, the rest for Turn-Key Fees, *&c.* I desired, being a stranger to their Custome, a few dayes time to consider of it; which was granted: In which season, I had the happiness, late at night, or early in the morning, to stand up upon a high Table, and lay mine ear to the side Roof of the Room, by which means, through the affectionate en-

dea-

deavours of a worthy Priſoner, and his worthy Companions cloſe Priſoners alſo, (that muſt, to lend me any converſe, lie all along upon the ground, and call at ſome *Creviſe*, but bleſſed be God, they were, from ſence of what they did undergoe, beſet with ſuch *Simpathy* towards me, that ſtill I had their ear in ſuch a manner, and at ſuch ſeaſons,) whom I acquainted with the Keepers Demands, deſiring to know what Juſt Cuſtome did require: from whom (as after the ſame was confirmed by the then Secretary; That it was not Warrantable, by any known *Law of England*, to require five pounds to buy off wearing *Irons*: Upon which, I gave this anſwer; I did not underſtand any juſt cauſe I had given for ſo ſevere an Impriſonment: much leſs to pay ſuch Fees; for which I was neither able nor willing. Upon which, many Cruel Indeavours were uſed, to exact a Conſent from me, and my *afflicted wife* not ſuffered to ſpeak with me but in the preſence of the Keeper, and after a chargeable *Order* for ſo much Priviledge firſt obtained: Nay many times Orders denyed again and again for my Friends admittance to me; and my Window Caſements muſt be nailed up, that I ſhould not have the benefit of that Common Aire which is every Slaves Birth-right. And when Proviſion was ſent me for my neceſſary ſupport, though a little ſerved, my Stomach ſo failed to eating, being

ſo

so close shut up, yet that must be kept from me, and frequent forced Fasts imposed on me; and however, what was sent for my dinner at twelve by the care of some loving Relations that lived neer the Prison, must be given me at four or five a clock; at which time I usually must *Break-fast*; and if meat were brought, I should be sure to want *beer* or *bread*, : so that at last I was forced to devise a way to get a *string* and *bagg* to be let down by night at the window, to convey some refreshment to me.

These Cruelties spreading abroad, occasioned applications to a higher power to obtain some respit; but in the general, things continued at this pass for some twelve weeks; in which time, for but receiving a note at the key hole by an open Prisoner, sent from my poor wife, then sick and weary with grief and successless travels about my release; the harmless nighbour that brought it secured; and my self taken out of this room sufficiently bad, (as I thought and felt) and put into another, neer twenty dayes hopeless and helpless in a visible way, (yet to Gods praise be it spoken, then least a Prisoner though most so;) being locked up in a Trap-Room; where I could hardly be heard with hollowing, it being a place where such condemned to death are usually secured. In this time more than thirty pound was spent to attempt

my

my releaſe, but all in effectual: Then was Application made to the *Kings Bench* Barre, where I had four or five chargeable *Habeas Corpus* before the Cruel Goaler would obey to bring me to the Barre.

Upon this, my afflicted wife was adviſed (your honoured Father being then L. Chief Juſtice) to beſeech your Worſhip, to view the Breviate of my Caſe, I being the next day to be brought before the Judges, both ſhe and my ſelf were perfect ſtrangers to you; yet it pleaſed God, upon your hearing our grievance, to affect your heart with ſuch a meaſure of Compaſſion, that you undertook the work, and never ceaſed till it was compleated which in two Terms more was brought about notwithſtanding the conſiderable oppoſition and ſuggeſtions of ſome Inſtruments to the contrary, (but here it may be remembred as an Addition to the habit of Cruelty attending that Priſon) I no ſooner was remanded back by the Judges till a convenient day of hearing in the Term following, but the Goaler thruſt me into the Common Room or Dungeon, where I remained for twenty dayes or more, becauſe I could not raiſe him ſeven pounds towards Chamber rent at that inſtant.

And though my uſage was hard, your honoured Father, to the praiſe of his juſt memory, gave patient hearing to all my Complaints; ſufficiently diſdaining the uſage, and

and commanding the Keeper for time to come it might be mended; also willing me to *Indite* him in the same Court: and when I told his Honour my mony was spent, he was pleased to reply, it should be done at the Courts Charge, I only *Prosecute*, and if it should happen till my Legal Release I should die with such ill usage, the Keeper should be indited for his Life.

VVorthy Sir, while other Council took our mony and declined to speak answerable to the trust reposed in them; your self, *gratis*, stood faithfully by me to the last.

Pardon, Dear Sir, my being somthing tedious in this Repetition, which I the rather am bold in; that you might see the great slavery God made you the sole instrument to deliver me from; and that your name and deeds may live fresh in the memory of me and mine, while time shall endure with us on this side the Grave. VVorthy Sir, this Imprisonment cost me above one hundred and thirty pounds, and above six Months Captivity in that cruel Goal, besides the loss of my shop, and Trade which remained out of my hands for two years to such detriment I am scarce yet recovered from: I have had nine or ten Imprisonments and Restraints more, some of them considerably chargeable, yet your heart and ear is open at all times to give your best assistance, still *gratis*, only because you are surely rai-

raised of God, to be my Friend; without the least merit of mine, only His *Mercy*, and your *good Nature*.

This leads me, Dear Sir, to the remembrance of that never to be forgotten farther Act of your kindness in the height of that dreadful Plague upon poor *London*, while the Providence of God afforded me for my self, Wife and several small Children, a little place of respit, in a Village neer *Darkin* in the County of *Surrey*: where, when what little money I had, upon the foresight of that Deluge coming upon *London*, gathered together to maintain us with bread, was neer spent; a very black Cloud seized on me, and many undue and unjust suggestions were laid against me, by some evil and busie Instruments of mischief: that because I was an *Ana-baptist*, as they are called, or *Phanatique*, I must therefore be looked upon, as disaffected to the Government. So that though the Cloud seemed to arise out of the North Countrey, yet upon some poor innocent persons in that County and my self, part of it must fall: so in short, I was ordered to *Windsor*: at this strait, money being almost gone, and how long Gods hand might remain upon poor *London*; wherehence I got my bread, none but the same God knew.

Yet go I must, notwithstanding all my pleadings, and importunity of many strangers with tears, that seemed to have pitty on my present

case,

case, reflecting upon the sad Providence by reason of the Plague, that had separated me and my family from our most native habitation, all the favour I could obtain, and that a Gentleman of his own good nature gave pledge for, was, that upon my parroll, if I would ride so early and late, as to be at the *Garter* in *VVindsor* next morning by nine, to meet the Guard and my fellow Prisoners, I should then injoy the privilidge of riding without Guard: this obtained, I speeded on my Journey, and left halfe of that little money I had (which was grown low) with my sorrowful wife and Children for their relief, and took the rest to buy me bread in the Castle, where undoubtedly I must have lodged, till ruined, had not God stirred up Your heart to Compassion in the way, for coming late to *Fosters*, where I was treated liker a neer Kinsman than a Prisoner: you no sooner heard my strait, but with all chearfulness, as if God had said verbally; *Go with this poor man, and stand by him in all his Troubles.* You called for your Clerk to make ready against eight next morning all things convenient for your passage to the *Garter* at *VVindsor*, which I well remember, to your perpetual honour be it spoken, these were your words: *Mr.* Smith, *I will (with Gods leave) go with thee; and my Clerk shall get three Horses ready by eight in the morning, and then shalt keep thy word;*

for we may, with much eaſe, be there by nine; and that is the hour it ſeemeth your engagement lieth upon you to perform. This, your Noble Promiſe, was as truly performed; and when we arrived at the *Garter*, the Souldiers waited ready for their Priſoner, then you were pleaſed to call for their Captain, and demand what accuſations was laid to my charge, and did immediately, upon your implicit belief of my proteſted innocency, repair to the Honourable Lord *Mordant*, then Conſtable of *Windſor*; where, in your preſence I had my Examination, and to your Glory be it ſpoken, you were pleaſed frankly to offer your ſelf body for body, yea to ingage all you had in the world on my behalf: which I ſhall ſin not to remember and repeat, although I can never requite. Upon which I was diſmiſſed, and to admiration of all that knew what had been ſuggeſted, was ſet free with this promiſe from his Honours own mouth, for ſuch wrong I ſhould fare the better, while I remained in the County. Thus hath your heart & hands been ready to do, & have not been wanting to lend your Purſe upon any emergent occaſion: and your Houſe hath been as a home to me and mine at all times: which I ſhall not ceaſe to pray God Almighty to requite to your ſelf and yours, for I never can.

The Premiſſes conſidered, Dear Sir, do not think me rude to be ſo bold, ſeeing I can do no more to perform a Debt, which in our Jour-

ney

ney to *Windsor*, I did then in my heart to God ingage to pay, namely, that when ever his providence would please to open a door for my Reprinting and publishing this Book, I would then with Gods good leave, give a brief account of his Mercies to me and mine, in Dedication of it to your self: and if any, for these my poor labours, are bettered, as I trust, and through Grace know many have been in time past, whose affectionate importunities, together with my Debt to your Worship, put me upon the study of many, I trust, useful Additions, proper to the decaying state of Christianity in this our Generation, as the wise God, who first put me upon this meditation, and pleased of his rich Grace to give me a word in season, not for the use of such as do think themselves in a higher Orb, but for them that are mean in their own esteem, I only, and humbly recommend it.

And now, Dear Sir, I having had alwaies from my first happy acquaintance with your self, so large a share of your heart-love, am the more bold to Dedicate this little Book into your hands: freely acknowledging, if any gain profit thereby, next to God, the praise is yours, by whose continued favours, under him, I have been delivered from such Perils, as otherwise had pressed me down into utter

Obli-

Oblivion, or at least to an incapacity on this Account.

Thus with my dutiful acknowledgment of your manifold Favours, I do humbly and heartily commit you, and all yours to the Merciful Protection of Almighty God, beseeching him so to multiply his Graces upon you, that you may see many good and happy dayes in this life, and inherit everlasting Blessedness in that which is to come. So prayes

Your Worships ever Obliged, and Thankfull Servant,

From Heart, and Habitation, this 15. day of *June* 1672.

Francis Smith.

TO

Every Judicious and Conſiderate

READER.

Chriſtian Reader.

THere was never more need from the beginning of the Creation to this day, for perſons profeſſing Godlineſs, to enter into their Cloſets, and to retire into their moſt ſecret Chambers, there to Commune with themſelves, and moſt ſeriouſly and narrowly to ſearch their hearts, and try their wayes, whether they be ſuch as can abide the ſtricteſt and ſevereſt ſcrutine, according to the ballance of the Sanctuary, and the Touch-ſtone of the Scriptures, and (it may be) a Fiery Trial, which is coming upon all the World, to try them that dwell upon the Earth. Let theſe things be ſeriouſly conſidered in ſuch a day as this is, wherein ſuch a multitude of Profeſſors of all ſorts do abound, who have enjoyed ſo long a time of peace and proſperity, which are apt in themſelves, through our carnal hearts, to lull us faſt aſleep in the bed of ſloath and carnal Security, and to beget a ſpiritual Lethargy in the Soul.

To awaken and to provoke one another to this great

duty

duty, let us call to mind our former dayes, when we were firſt illuminated, how great a zeal did then poſſeſs us, what care, what diligence, that we might be found approved of in the ſight of God, who judgeth the hearts, and tryeth the reins? It is the ſad complaint of diſcerning Chriſtians to this day, (and is there not a cauſe!) that there is a lamentable decay and decreaſe of Godlineſs, in the power and life thereof among profeſſors. This is a Lamentation, and it ſhall be for a Lamentation.

It does therefore exceedingly concern all Chriſtians of what rank ſoever, ſeriouſly to ſearch and examine their own hearts, and to cry what have we done! what is the matter! ſurely the diſpenſation that is upon us at this day, is to try and to purge, and to make white, that they which are upright might be made manifeſt, when the Hypocrite and formal profeſſor, that cannot abide the tryal, ſhall ſtumble and fall, and the ſhame of their nakedneſs ſhall appear. Our lot is certainly fallen in the laſt dayes upon whom the ends of the World are come, and our Lord himſelf hath expreſly foretold, that in the laſt dayes among profeſſors iniquity ſhall abound, and the love of many ſhall wax cold; *and that then the wiſe Virgins, as well as the fooliſh, will all ſlumber and ſleep,* Mat. 24. 13. and 25. 1, 2, 3.

So likewiſe the Apoſtle Paul *foretelling the evil of the laſt times, ſets down a black Catalogue of ſins that will be found, not among the prophane only as in all ages) but in ſuch perſons,* having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof, 2 *Tim.* 3, *beginning.*

Formality *and* Security *abounding among Profeſſors, is the ſin and ſign of the laſt dayes. And herein we may diſcern gray and hoary hairs, more than here and there upon the head of this old World. We are fallen into the lees and dregs of time, and the World the older it grows, the worſe, declining now into its dotage.*

Bleſſed

Bleſſed is that Servant, *that in ſuch a day as this is,* *keeps his* Garment unſpotted, *and his* Conſcience undefiled, *that hath his* Lamp burning, *and his* Light ſhining, *and his* Loyns girded, *and alwayes expecting and prepared for his* Lords coming. Bleſſed is that Servant whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing.

The deſign of this enſuing Treatiſe, (*which we recommend unto thy ſerious peruſal*) *is to ſet forth the ſad eſtate of a* Dying *and* Decaying Chriſtian, *ſhewing the* Symptomes, Cauſes *and* Cures *of the* Decay *of* Godlineſs; *Together with the* Benefit *and* Means *of the* Growth *and* Increaſe *of* Godlineſs. *As thou maiſt ſee in the Title and Frontiſpiece of this Book.*

A Subject certainly never more ſuitable and ſeaſonable than at this day, when as Godlineſs *it ſelf in the power and life of it, is at ſo low an ebb, and grows every day more than other, into a ſenſible Decay and Conſumption. And therefore this Peice needs not our Commendation but a greater than we are hath Avouched this whoſe Wiſdome and Authority we muſt adore;* A Word fitly ſpoken, *or ſpoken in ſeaſon,* is like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver.

For the Author, by that acquaintance we have with him we judge him to be an experienced Chriſtian, and one who hath made it his buſineſs to diſcern the Signs of the Times, and we doubt not but the ſavoury Chriſtian, upon the through reading of his Book, will judge the ſame with us.

Reader, we ſhall detain thee no longer in the Porch, enter the Houſe it ſelf: Come and ſee *whether it perform not more than we ſpeak.*

Now the bleſſing of God go along with it, and with thee in the reading of it, and he that gives ſeed to the ſower, and bleſſeth the encreaſe thereof, grant unto us

all that we may remember our first wayes, and do our first works; and more abundantly; that our last dayes may be our best dayes, and our last works may be more than our first; that we may be Trees of Righteousnes, of the Lords own planting, that we may bring forth most and best fruit in our old age, when all other Trees cease to yeild their encrease. In a word, that we may not be found wanting, nor too light, when our Lord shall come again to Judge every man according to his Works: *Shall be the dayly Prayer of,*

Thy Servants for Christs sake,

Henry Jessey, Henry Denne

John Gosnold

To all that are called to be Saints,

Especially my dear relations in Yorkshire West-Riding; *together with my brethren and Companions in the Faith in the County of* Lincoln, Northamptonshire, Buckingham shire, Kent, Sussex, *and* Surrey, *with all that in every other place call upon the Lord Iesus, and all in and about the* City *of* London, *Grace and Peace be multiplyed.*

My dear fellow Travelers.

HOwever it is with you now, as to your spiritual state, I am bold to affirm, that the dayes of your first Espousal, as in themselves, so in your own estimation, were very happy and joyful dayes, and you so afflicted for your own former Mis-doings, and so affected with what gracious change, God through his rich

Grace

Grace then made, that with all your might you did willingly render up your ſelves to Chriſt Jeſus for your Saviour, and with all free affection and humble ſubmiſſion choſe him, or rather cloſed with Gods own Appointment, that this his Son ſhould become your *King* to Rule you, your *Prieſt* to make Attonement for you, and alſo your *Prophet* to Teach you; in a word your All in All: Thus at the ſight and ſenſe of what *Sin* and *Satan* had been, and what now *Chriſt Jeſus* would be by way of change, your hearts were wonderfully taken up with admiring this choyce, that were not only of Gods preparing to Redeem you from the *higheſt wrath*, but to Redeem you to the *higheſt Glory*: I fear your hearts now this change is not ſo new, is unable to expreſs what once (though in the time you had leſs Knowledge) you could have reported of this matter, the ſenſe of Wrath then at Gods unfolding your condition, being ſo *apparet*, and the neceſſity of a *Saviour*, without which you muſt *periſh*, being ſo *urgent*, put you upon that thoughtfulneſs of heart, what to do that you might not *Periſh*, *but be SAVED*, and filled your hearts and hands ſo full of better buſineſs, that *Husband*, *Wife*, *Children*, *Houſe*, *Land Trade*, and whatſoever elſe till then had been *dear* to you, now became ſtrange in your *eſteem*; thus did you run well, and of Chriſt Jeſus were known well *your fruit being ſweet to his taſte*, and *love* in each anſwered *love*, with ſuch delight, that you could ſay with *David*, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and whom in Earth in compariſon of thee?* Was not then the light of his countenance *life* to you, and his withdrawings your *death*? none but Chriſt could ſatisfie you, to be talking with him, and whether he is in the Gar-

den, or Wilderness, or any Solitary place, you must be with him; nay, rather could you not *bleed* with him, than *feast* without him? thus in nothing more happy than with your Beloved, wondring greatly at this great Grace, that in such a *condition* should find you, and to such a *condition* bring you: look back, call to remembrance dayes past, was it not thus with you, and a thousand times more?

But how is it now you have seen some of the depth of Christs love, and born the heat of the day in some measure? Do you love him yet more and more? Is, *Prayer*, *Hearing*, *Reading*, *Weeping*, *Watching*, *Fasting*, *Doing*, *Suffering*, *welcome still*? Doth the Pulse of your Soul run this way stronger and stronger? *The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth* More *and* More *to the perfect day.* Are ye able to speak in truth this to be your condition? Or do you grow *weary* and *faint* in your *mind*, thinking now Christ's way too strait, his work too great? If it be come to this, then it is a piece of the *saddest news* that ever came to thy *Soul*; Yet God knows it is no new thing, but an evil too too common among Professors, who like Israel of old, thought *Manna* while new, most welcome, yet in its continuance, though Gods *Institution*, (which was a reason sufficient why it still should be welcome) they *loath* and call it *light Bread*; thus were their goodness like a morning cloud or early dew that passeth away: In like manner, New Testament Churches, that had fair and flourishing beginnings, yet in time, comes to hang down their heads, and grow *feeble and faint in their minds.* How had the *Corinth*-Church that had been their Apostles glory and crown, become his *sorrow* and *grief*; what bitter messages doth God send

to

to moſt of the Churches in *Aſia*, complaining that they had *fallen from their firſt love*, threatning them with no leſs then to unchurch and ſpew them out of his mouth; ſuch wild Grapes in time, did this once flouriſhing Church bring forth; and the very complaint of *Ieremiah* concerning Iſrael in them vetified, *Chap.* 2. 21. *Yet had I planted thee a noble Vine wholly, a right Seed; how then art thou turned into a degenerate Plant, of a ſtrange Vine to me?*

My dear breathren, theſe are not the tyth of the ſad inſtances that might be alledged of ſuch as once were fair and flouriſhing, yet in continuance of time to a ſad degree left their ſtanding, and ſo incurred Gods ſore diſpleaſure and ſeverity upon them; all which premiſed, proves it ſo far from being any of our *happineſs to begin well*, though at the rate here mentioned in our *Eſpouſal dayes*, that truly it will but prove an *addition* to our *unhappineſs*, if we ſhall not *end well*; *for better is the end of a thing than the beginning*: All which notes a Chriſtians true good, to conſiſt as in a fair beginning, ſo both to hold on well, and *above all to end well.* What Chriſtian is he, that will not tremble then to conſider both Old and new Teſtament Churches, what fair beginnings they made, and yet what diſmal ends they came to, as *Iude* complains, *Trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.*

The good Lord help you my Brethren, and my ſelf, to lay this thing to heart, that with fear and trembling, we may work through our Salvation and from firſt to laſt *avoid* that *damning ſin* of *carnal ſecurity*, that God knowes doth too too much rock many Profeſſors in our dayes into a *deadly* ſleep, who being once green and flouriſhing, ſtill retain a ſtrong

opinion of hereafter glory, though grown as dry and barren as the Fig-tree, that Chriſt Jeſus would not ſuffer to ſtand.

Thus conſidring with my ſelf, and muſing in my mind what a *fearful* thing it would be for me and you, that have had ſuch like beginnings, and have made as great promiſe of a good concluſion, *to fall into the hands of the living God*, who will ſtrip us as naked of his Glory (if here we are found wanting) as ever we were born, unleſs the falling of former Churches prove ſo our admonition, as *he that ſtandeth takes heed leſt he fall*; for which cauſe, I have both for your benefit and my own, gathered together in this new edition forty *Symptomes* of *Growing*, and forty more of *decaying* to *godlineſs*; in the firſt you may (for preſent) only read the *Signs* of *growth*; in the ſecond, you may read both the *Signs* of *Decay* to *godlineſs*, with the Cauſes and Remedies, which with Gods bleſſing (I humbly pray and hope) may tend to your ſtrengthning, if growing; or to your ſpeedy reducement, if declining: Read therefore what now by the help of the Lord is brought to your eye, with much ſeriouſneſs, and while ye look upon the book, be ſtill reflecting both upon the heart and life, with this kind of ſearching language; *Is my caſe thus, or is it thus?* However your own opinions may be of *Growth* or *decay*, they are your *Higheſt Concernment* entertain therefore with all love my poor yet affectionate Dedication, remembring *the Marriage of the Lamb draweth nigh and his Bride muſt make her ſelf ready*: Be ſure then you be not found without your Wedding Garment; but imagine your ſelves the very next door to *Being* compaſſed with the *majeſty of that day*; let the thoughts of it keep you

company,

company, in *Buying, Selling, Eating, Drinking*; yea in the whole course of your Pilgrimage, and follow God with incessant Prayers to fill your Souls brim full of the living Worth of *hereafter glory*, and the *unsupportable weight of its contrary*; that to this great end these my poor Labours, and such as these, in the glory of their perfection, may *prepare* you upon the most *acceptable terms for future Glory*; is the true desire of

Your unworthy Brother *in the dear*

Concernments of the Gospel.

Francis Smith.

These following Meditations, were sent me enclosed in a Letter from my Worthy Friend *C. I. M.* then Prisoner in *Windsor* Castle.

O That the Author of this book did know,
What comforts from it; to my soul did flow.
He would be incouraged, yet once agen,
To imbrace his study, and to take his Pen.
And write on my behalf, a Psalm of praise,
For me to magnifie God all my dayes;
Divine providence, sent mee't in an hour,
When Sathan he, was using of his power,
And subtle wiles my soul for to ensnare,
Carrying me along, twixt hope and despair,
Perswading of me that my case was good,

which

Which I beleived, till that I underſtood,
By what the Author of this book made out,
Which put the caſe with me out of all doubt.
That chriſtians might from good eſtate decline
They not living to principles divine.
From which my ſoul was warpt and turn'd aſide
Following of thoſe that prov'd an erring guide.
Sathan combind with my corrupted heart,
Occaſion'd me from Gods wayes for to ſtart;
For want of watchfulneſs, I'de like t' have loſt,
My ſhare i'th price, that ſo dear did coſt,
My bleſſed Saviour; even his hearts blood,
Freely expos'd to do his people good.
And now again, that I ſuch grace ſhould find,
That let ſuch grace, ſo ſlip out of my mind,
As I have done; let me do ſo no more,
My gracious God, and Chriſt my Saviour,
Let me be alwaies ſtrictly on my watch,
And no more ſnapt, by him that lies o'th catch.
O let my heart no more with him combine,
But cauſe it cloſe with principles divine:
And let my labour now continually be
To waite on Chriſt, and follow none but he,
O let the Author of this little book
Rewarded be, for the great pains he took.
From which, my ſoul, hath reaped ſo much good
Let grace from God, be given him like a flood.

Thine,

John Maſon.

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Psal. 92. 12. The Righteous shall flourish like a Palm-Tree, he shall grow like a Cedar in *Lebanon.*

1. WHen your chief delight is with the Saints, especially them that excel in Virtue, Psalm 16 3.

2. When the smitings of the Righteous are not a burthen to you, you can hear of your faults with affectionate attention, Psalm 141 5.

3. When Jesus Christ in the midst of Temptation is more to you then all the World, Phil. 3. 8.

4. When Reproch for Christ makes you not ashamed of Christ Mark 8. 38. Heb. 11. 26.

5. When wandring Thoughts in time of Duty, find less entertainment than formerly, Psal. 139. 23. 1 Cor. 13. 11.

6. When length of standing in the Profession of Christianity, works increase of hatred to all Sin Psal. 119. 104. 113.

7. When you carry about with you a constant jealousie over your own Heart, that it turn not aside from God and Goodness, Prov. 28. 14.

8. When every known new Mercy begets new Thankfulness, and that with delight. Psal. 145. 2.

9. When known Calamity in Gods House, begets deep sorrow in your Heart. Neh. 1. 4.

10. When Gods afflicting you for your Sin, makes you love God the better. Psal. 119. 75.

11. When the same care and travail you at first laboured in to find Christ, is as much, if not more laboured in to keep Christ, Heb. 6. 11, 12.

12. When a feeling Sense of the Peace, and Edification of the Church of God, lies so near your Heart, that you can prefer it above your chief concerns. Psal. 137. 6. Rom. 14. 19. 2 Cor. 11. 9.

13. When under deep Distress or Languishing, the word of God is precious to you, Psal. 119 92.

14 When any condition, though in its self mean, as it comes from God, is most welcom. Job 1. 21. Hab. 3. 17, 18.

15. When the peace of Christs House begets chief joy in your Heart Psal. 122 7, 8, 9.

16 When chief care to avoid all Sin, is as truly occasioned through fear of Dishonouring God, and incurring his present displeasure, as Wrath to come, Neh. 5 15 Gen. 39. 9.

17. When the least apprehension of Gods withdrawing, makes you seek him more earnestly in such ways wherein he will be found, Ps. 6.

18. When every Company is burthensom to you, that is not designing your Fathers Glory, but derogating there-from, Ps. 120. 5. 2 Pet. 2. 7

19. When the Sins of others come so near your Heart, that you weep sadly to see such Persons transgress Gods Commandments, Ps. 119. 1.

20. When the light of your understanding grows more strong to your making judgment of Spiritual things according to Gods word, Ep. 1. 18.

21. When bitter things become sweet to you, as they are squared by, and sounded on the Will of God, Mat. 26. 38. 39. Acts 21. 14.

22. When the Path of the humble is so delightful, that you'd rather be with them, than in the Tents of the ungodly, Acts 20. 19. Ps. 84. 10

23. When your pity is such to perishing people, that you cannot but weep at the thoughts of their Ruine, Luk. 19 41. Jer. 9. 1. Phil. 3. 18, 19.

24. When Prosperity doth not with allowance lift you up, nor Adversity immoderately cast you down, Phil. 4. 11, 12.

25. When your Resolution to follow God fully through all Difficulties, is stable, and Temptations to the contrary, tends but to your strengthening, Acts 20. 24.

26. When the Yoak of Self-denyal as imposed by Christ Jesus, is not grievous, but pleasant to You, Mat. 11. 29, 30. Mark 10. 28.

27. When you are so acquainted with your Spiritual standing, that you are easily apprehensive of the least step to Decay. 1 Thes. 5. 4.

28. When the force of the Resurrection and Judgement to come, lies so close at your Heart, that it makes you answer every Call of Christ, to do or suffer cheerfully, 2 Cor. 5. 9, 10. Acts 24. 15, 16.

29. When the hopeful assurance of a City to come, makes you contented to be a stranger to your own, Heb. 11. 9, 10, 13. 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18.

30. When increase of Time in Christs acquaintance, works increase of Delight in Communion with Christ, Psa. 92. 12, 13, 14.

31. When in the walk of Faith you are more frequent, and less depend upon walking by Sense, 2 Cor. 5. 7, Gal. 2. 20.

32. When you are quicker sighted at your worst part to self-abasing, than at your best part to self-admiring, Gen. 32. 10 Eph. 3. 8.

33. When the Majesty of the great God, considering how visible you are in his sight, hath an awful prevailence upon your Heart, Job 31. 4.

34 When Conscience is so tender, that every little disobedient doing, grates upon, or grieves your Spirit, 2 Chro. 34. 37. Heb. 13. 18.

35. When you are at open war, and constant Hostility with bosom-sin, as displeasing to God, and forbidden by his Law, Psa. 18. 23.

36. When Heart-work is of more worth than House-work; as your Soul is more precious, than your Temporal concerns, Ezra 7. 10.

37. When for inward motions to any Sin, you have as truly Heart-sorrow, as for the outward acts of any Sin, both being displeasing to God, and forbidden by his word, Psal. 119. 113. 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5.

38. When you have a thirsting care to get the power of Godliness in your Heart, rather then the form of Godliness in the Head, or outward Profession, 2 Cor. 1. 12.

39. When the worship of God agreable to his Word, is highly prized, and faithfully practised in the worst of times, Mal. 3. 14, 15, 16.

40. When the Soul is more hungry for the word of God, then the Body is for temporal Food. Job 23. 12. Psal. 119, 72, 162.

Signs

SIGNES OF A DYING or DECAYING CHRISTIAN.

CHAP. I.

Containing in it a Sign of Dying to Christ; with three causes of its coming, which being avoyded, may serve as remedies against its ruine; with profitable Objections answered.

SIGN I.

When you are so indifferent to assemble, or frequent the Church of God, that you can come, or at your own pleasure, cannot come.

IT is not only possible, but too too common, for Christians after they have been sometime conversant in the worship and service of Gods House, to come to this declining frame of Spirit, having seen into some of the depth of that that (at their first conversion, being mighty new, was mighty welcome; but proving more natural to them, becomes in some kind burthensome; then Satan, that long waited for it, gets advantage upon them, to dispute the case with

them, Whether there is such necessity of that labour and travail about their Religion, as they take; and by this means *Jeroboam*-like, 1 *King.* 12. 27, 28 When he would draw the hearts of *Israel* aside, tells them; it is too much to go up to *Jerusalem* to worship, and so makes two Calves of Gold, and puts the one in *Dan* and the other in *Bethel*, saying, *These be thy Gods O Israel.*

Now such pretences of ease as these, takes presently with deceitful hearts, especially when there is a shew of attaining the same end they looked for, with less cost and charge; by this means the heart lets go those powerful convictions wrought by the holy Spirit at his first taking possession, which leads the mind out to make Religions getting and holding, a labour, work, or business.

Now lets go its first unwearied diligence, and so takes in this Spirit of indifferency to assemble; which plainly discovers, that now but half the heart attends that Spiritual service, in which the body is present; and indeed thus much ground by a Christian lost, gives such a wound to his heavenly trade; that the savour and relish he had at his first beginning to run well, is now much departed, and so his appetite being withdrawn, makes his stomack loath or nautiate that food, that once was savory and nourishing.

Now what likelier way can be imagined, to hurt and spoil a Christians Communion with his God, and so by little and little, remove him from his spiritual trade; then to possess his heart with such kind of indifferency as this, even a willing negligence to assemble; and so estranging himself to Christ Jesus's Fold where he is wont to feed his flock at noon-day, being a stranger there, to the daily opportunities of spiritual gain, must needs loose in his spiritual trade, and consequently

ſequently be affected with new lovers, and luſt after their unprofitable dainties.

Doth not experience ſpeak mournfully in this, and confeſs the field to be more then half loſt, when that early zeal to Chriſtian aſſemblings grows low; and though once remained greatly burthened at *materiall hinderances*, yet now is content with *ſlight excuſes*, ſeeing no ſuch neceſſity, as is by zealous perſons pretended, and once by them believed, ſo often to aſſemble; and as by ſad experience ſome can witneſs, when others have been delightfully taken up with Gods publick worſhip: they idling up and down, have found Satan not a little buſie; nor his deſign a little taking, to prepare their ſpeedy ruine; For as by often rubbing hand in hand, warmth is gotten; or by often uſing working-tools ruſt is prevented; even ſo a frequent aſſembling among Gods children, inclines and diſpoſeth the heart to good, and conſequently impairs and leſſens the old mans hold; being under that continual means, that renews and inclines the mind into a ſpiritual likeneſs, to Chriſt its head; and ſo is wrought up to a ſpiritual complyance with every new motion to good performances; ſaying with *David*, *When thou ſaidſt, ſeek my face, my heart ſaid, thy face Lord will I ſeek.* Pſal. 27. 8. no ſooner ſaith God; *ſeek my face*, but without delay *Davids* heart ſaith, *thy face Lord will I ſeek*; I was glad when they ſaid, *Come let us go into the houſe of the Lord*, Pſal. 122. 1. it was joy to *David* to ſee Perſons ſo mindful of their true good, as to be forward to aſſemble.

All this premiſed, beſpeaks this indifferency to aſſemble of a very bad tendency, plainly giving beholders to underſtand, that good things were not *eſteemed* ſo much *as good* by ſuch *Perſons*; as they was ſo *eſteemed as new*, we have ſad inſtances of this kind of ſpiri-

tual decay, in *Israel* of old, *Num.* 11. 4, 5, 6. *The mixt multitude that was among them, fell a lusting, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? we remember the fish which we did eat in* Egypt *freely; the cucumbers, and the melons; and the leeks, and the onyons; but now our souls is dryed away, there is nothing at all besides this Manna before our eyes.* So Chap. 2. 5, *And the people spake against God, and against* Moses, saying, *Wherefore have ye brought us out of* Egypt *to dye in this Wilderness? For there is no bread, neither any water; and our souls loath this light bread.*

Here Gods own *institution*, that once was welcome to them, and being new, they was mighty eager after it, insomuch that they could dispence with breaking a law, to gather it as *Exod.* 16. at large proves; where we read of its first institution: this Manna that the Holy Ghost, *Psal.* 78. 25. calls Angels food: they now loath, and call light bread; this Manna though Gods own appointment, that fed them to the full, and was to continue with them till they come to eat the old corn in the Land of promise. *Josh.* 5. 12. yet this they *loath* under its constant injoyment, and wish for *Egypts* food again.

How zealous were persons in this age, twenty or thirty years ago, when truth begun more clearly to break forth? no cost or early pains mattered; happy were they that could come sooneſt; then were assemblies crouded; good men incouraged to labour, Gods name delightfully worshipped; insomuch, that without wrong one might say, since such days the Kingdom of Heaven have suffered violence, and the violent take it by fore.

Is God's hand shortned, that such workings of heart are not now as was then? Is not now assemblies *thin*, performances *small*, *seldom* and *late*? Is it becau-

God is a Wilderneſs to his people? Is it not becauſe they *ſurfeit* under fulneſs? Doth not many run to and fro, that knowledge is increaſed, and ſons and daughters propheſie? How then may this ſerve to rebuke that ſlothful Spirit in any, that are careleſs to aſſemble, and calls on them to be reſtleſs with God, till they are again reſtored to ſuch a *Spirit of zeal*; as they had in the days of their firſt Eſpouſal: *lukewarmneſs* here, being that *inlet-ſin*, to ſpiritual ſpoiling; diſappointing God of gracious opportunities to intich them. and thorow this neglectance, offers daring occaſion to the Devil to tempt them; Doth not the holy Apoſtle. *Rom.* 10. 14, 15. plainly imply an impoſſibility of believing in him, of whom they have not heard? *And how ſhall they hear, faith he, without a Preacher, as it is written?* how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Goſpel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things? doth not this ſaying, in ſo many words declare the reaſon of perishing, to be want of *knowledge?* Hoſ. 4. 6. And the cauſe of *ignorance*, the want of *preaching*: How doth this then commend Gods high approbition of aſſembling, it being the proper ſeaſon for preaching. *Then they that feared the Lord, ſpake often one to another, and the Lord heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name*: In an evil time when many grew weary, and ſaid, it is a vain thing to ſerve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and walked mournfully before him; then ſuch as met often, were highly eſteemed of in Gods account.

Alas! Alas! Is not preaching, though accompanied with never ſo much inward and outward pains-taking, then matter of ſcorn to ſtanders by who live

vainly; also grateful to the *Devil our grand adversary*, when few attend it, and of those, most part *flat*, *low*, *indisposed*, and *weary*, having little spiritual life or vigor in them; on whom common custom to assemble, hath eaten out the spiritual relish that should be in them: but I shall close this with Gods counsel, *Heb.* 10. 24, 25. *Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as we may see the day approching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.* Doth not this *dismal* conclusion, *v.* 26. proffer it self, as the most probable end of such as cease to assemble, and makes way for their fearful and inevitably *ruine*? shall any dare then to content themselves with light excuses, to hinder their assembling, and not rather provoke and exhort one another to so good a work?

But I shall conclude this first Sign of dying to Christ, with offering briefly three Remedies how it may be removed, where begun, or prevented, where like to come.

First, consider and lay to heart; That to assemble is a very weighty *duty*, and requires all your heart; *Isa.* 55. 3. *Encline your ear and come unto me; Hear, and your souls shall live*; see Prov. 8. 34, 35. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching dayly at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors: for whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord* Plainly noting, that diligent hearkning, which cannot be without assembling, is the way to life; therefore not to be slightly looked at, *Acts* 3. 23. *Every soul that will not hear this Prophet, shall be cut off from amongst the People.*

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Persons may think it a light thing to forbear hearing, and an offence only to the assembly; but God will count it a despising him, and the means he hath ordained; *The Children of* Ephraim *being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of Battel: they kept not Gods Covenant, but refused to walk in his Law: therefore the Lord heard this; and a fire was kindled in his wrath against* Jacob; *For their hearts was not right with God.*

Let us take heed therefore, that we refuse not him that spake from Heaven; but as we must consider, that it is a weighty duty to assemble, so it requires that we come with all our hearts; this God calls for, and where it is wanting, performances will not be acceptable; *This people draw nigh me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips but their heart is far from me.* Isa. 29. 13. it is Gods complaint by *Jeremiah, Judah hath not turned to me with her whole heart, but fainedly*; with a heart, and a heart, a heart as much a contrary way, as that way; they were indifferent, as willing not to turn as to turn; this makes offerings to be abhorred, the contrary by Christians must be made at; *Blessed are they that seek him with their whole heart.* Psal. 119. 25. Less then the whole heart begets jarring, prevents harmony, hinders the spiritual building.

2. A second Remedy is to consider, that it is not possible to prevent this spirit of indifferency, but by continuing as industrious to keep what ye have gained, as you were to get it, the *prayers*, the *tears*, the *searchings* of *heart*, the *attentive hearing*, and *frequent assemblings*, that you in order to your first espousal did diligently follow, you must still hold on in; that you may keep and increase the same, for the promises run in no other channel, *Prov.* 2. 4. *If*

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thou ſeek for wiſdom as for ſilver, and ſearch for it as for hid treaſure: Then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. Hoſ. 6. 3. *Then ſhall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he ſhall come to us as the rain; the latter and former rain unto the earth.* God will be to ſuch as follow on to know him in his way, as the former and latter rain is to the earth, which without it is dry and barren, but being refreſhed therewith, proves green and fruitful.

Now alas, perſons when once they are gotten into Chriſt's Fold, think their work well nigh done; but God knows it is but then begun, their Labour before was but to come into the vineyard, and there I am ſure they muſt not be *idle*; they are put there to *work*, to be lights to others, and ſhew forth Chriſts virtues; and there God will prune them, dreſs them, water them, but it is that they may be *fruitful*, elſe they muſt be plucked up as cumberers of the ground; do not therefore think your work is now neer done, for you are but now begun, you are now entred into the War; liſted under your Captain Chriſt Jeſus, and muſt till *death*, continue *fighting*, *ſtriving*, and *overcoming*, that at laſt you may *overcome*: therefore if you *read*, *prayed*, *faſted*, *watched*, *weeped*, *aſſembled* much before, now do it *much more*, 2 Cor. 5. *We labour*, (or made a buſines of it) *to be accepted of God*; and ſaith the holy Apoſtle St *Peter*, writing to them which had obtained like precious faith, through the righteouſneſs of God and Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour; and had eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt, exhorts them, *to give* all diligence *to add to their faith, virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly*

ly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful: But if they lack these things, they are blind, and cannot see afar off, but have forgotten they was purged from their old sins, 2 Pet. 1. 2. One would think that persons that had gone thus far, as to obtain like precious faith with Gods elect, and were purged from their old sins, having escaped (or were escaping) the corruption that is in the world through lust, might have well nigh done their work, yet the holy Ghost here shews them, that now their work is but begun; and saith, they must give all diligence; so saint *Paul* to the *Philippians.* Chap. 2. 12. *My brethren, as you have alwaies obeyed, both in my presence, and absence;* work *out your own salvation with* fear *and* trembling; from all this we may learn, that its not being idle in Christs Vineyard, if it cost us much diligence to get in, it must cost us much more to keep in: so I shall conclude this second Remedy with the holy Ghosts counsel to the Church of the *Hebrews,* Chap. 6. 11, 12. *And we desire that every one of you* (mark it well) *do shew the* same diligence *to the full assurance of hope to the end, that you be not* sloathful, *but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

Thirdly, a third Remedy may be this, that you would humbly and constantly endeavour to profit something in every assembly, make it your care to be still doing or getting good; then you are about your days-work, content not your selves to come together from day to day, and wait under the ministry, going away without gain; but come to the assembly with sensibility of many things you yet want; this will quicken your *zeal,* ripen your expectation, and prepare way for God that delights to be rich in giving, to give you *richly.*

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You will profit little, though you want never so much, if you are little sensible of your wants; and God will give you little because you will be but capable to improve little, for where the sense of want is low, there the Pulse God-ward will beat Faintly; and nothing more doth occasion this indifferency to assemble, then seeing it amount to little in the profit and advantage to persons that are frequent in attending, it makes them count, better stay at home, than be never the better for their meeting together, *Mal*, 3. 14. *You have said it is a vain thing to serve the Lord; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts*: They went not surely the right way to expect profit, nor had their eye upon right profit; but something they did propose to themselves in coming that they got not; and so cries out, it is in vain to serve him; it is even thus among professors. Now, if they see meetings come to little, though the fault be only in themselves, it tends to make them think lightly of assembling; *Who is there among you*, saith God; *Mal.* 1. 10 *that would shut the doors for naught, or kindle a fire on my Altar for naught; he that ploweth, ploweth in hope and he that soweth, soweth in hope*; that is, persons that do work, expect and count upon fruit therefrom; they will not do it for nothing, and indeed it is but reasonable, he that plants a vineyard should drink of the wine thereof; great layings out, preparing the heart for expectations of great returns, and when persons do lay out, and count upon answerable returns; as they righteously may, God being pleased they should, and this coming to pass tends much to their encouragement.

Object. But some may say, I have gone long to the assemblies, and gone on purpose sensible of many wants and have counted upon to profit, (as here you direct me)

me) yet for all this I am ready to grow weary, for I see it come to little, I am still shallow in my understanding, and weak in my memory.

Answ. I shall answer this objection two ways: first, by praying you to enquire, whether that little you do know and have learned, you do put into practice; What can ingage God more to teach you to know more, then walking up to what you do know? *Oh thou that art named the house of* Jacob, *is the spirit of the Lord straitned, are these his doings?* Doth not my words do good to them that walk uprightly, *Mica.* 2. 7. see to it, whether you live not much short of what you do know, and if you find you do, as some such defect must needs be the cause why you *profit* so little, then you will see great reason God should not trust you with five Talents, seeing you improve not two.

But secondly, seeing you do profit little, Be troubled much, let it be your burthen; while persons in assembling gain but little, and are but little troubled, they are not like to have their condition much mended: To come often and profit little, is very sad; but to be *unsensible* of ones wants is much *sadder*; Whereas on the contrary, to be in want, and so sensible of ones want, that they go burthened up and down, is the best way to get remedy; when *Joseph* was in affliction, some that were concerned to bear part of his burthen were so unsensible, that God complains against them, *Amos* 6. 6. *They were not grieved at the affliction of* Joseph; they were so far from easing him, or freeing themselves from provoking of God to bring them into such like trouble, that they were not so much as grieved; had no burthen upon them, were therefore fit matter to be indeed deservedly brought themselves into the like condition; a most

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remarkable and profitable example, if heeded by by Christians; we have to this very purpose, in *Daniel* that holy man, *Chap. 9. v. 2.* when he understands by reading, that there were a number of years for *Jerusalems* captivity, how was he burthened that he might know it, is evident, if you read but what he did, *v. 3. I set my face to seek the Lord God by prayer and supplication; with fasting, and sack-cloth and ashes*; behold here a gracious pattern for Christians, that want to know great things from God, *Daniel* sets his face unto the Lord, with such qualifications attending this performance, as though *Daniel* would be content with no denial; so Chap. 10. 2, 3. *A thing was revealed to* Daniel, *but the time appointed was long*; *In those days*, I Daniel *was mourning three full weeks*; *I eat no pleasant bread, neither came flesh, nor wine in my mouth, till three whole weeks were fulfilled*: That such manner of burthen and trouble as this, at the sense of ones ignorance, is not only the way to get profit; but indeed a most acceptable way with God, and so liked as to speed presently.

Let us see then what is written in *Dan.* 9. 23. *At the* Beginning of thy supplication, (mark that) *the Commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.* Had not *Daniels* Supplications, Fasting, Sack-cloth and Ashes, proved a prevailing cause with God, to send an Angel to make him understand; Wherefore serves this thus written? At the beginning of thy Supplication; so *Chap.* 10. 12. An Angel said in a vision, *Fear not* Daniel, for from *the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and chasten thy soul before thy God; thy words were heard, and I am come forth because of thy words.* Doth not all this call upon Christians to do three things.

First,

First, to get a mighty sense of their ignorance, which is the grand cause they do not profit.

Secondly, to be greatly burthened that it is so with them.

Thirdly, to set their faces towards the Lord God by prayer and supplication, without ceasing, both to be and to abide otherwise: Is not the Prophet *Daniels* Writing for our learning, and to encourage us to take the same course? God sorely dislikes the contrary, *Isa.* 32. 9. *Rise up ye women that are at ease,* (not troubled or burthened) *hear my voyce ye careless Daughters, and be troubled*: Thus much may serve to inform a willing mind, how to get from under the power of this Dying Sign of indifferency to Assemble, and so pass to the second.

CHAP. II.

Containing three Causes of wearinesse to spiritual Worship, and the principal Reasons thereof.

SIGN II.

When in your solemnest Worship, you are quickly weary without warrantable cause.

It is possible to come to this pass, at but a seeming occasion, and persons create some kind of pretence why they are weary; if it happen that at some time they are not so particularly and personally concerned, in that part of Gods Worship, where they are present; It so falling out, that the matter God is intreated about, they are not so at want in, or what is preached, they to some considerable degree are informed in already: This may fall out in numerous Congregations, where different conditions, ministers different occasions

occasions as to the manner of carrying on Gods Worship; and though at such a time for a growing Christian, there is no room to be weary, he being as well delighted occasionally to hear, or pray over again what he knows, as he is to hear what he knows not: in the one he takes occasion to *praise* for what was; in the other, to *praise* for what is; yet declining persons will in such a case as this, when they are not so nearly concerned, take advantage not only to be weary, but from hence plead their justification so to be.

But this Sign speaks to persons under a further consideration, such as in their solemnest Worship are quickly weary in their most intimate, private, Personal, Closet performances, retired from company, and set to the most intimate Worship of God, in *fasting*, *praying*, *self-examining*, and the like; yea, from a sense of mighty Need drawn to this, and yet *quickly weary*, must needs argue them deep in this decay; and that in such there is a very strong combate, who shall now gain the field, they being a weary in their solemnest Worship: It is evident hence, that the enemy hath got more than ordinary advantage, and strikes now at the very Root of their *Religion*, aiming at once as it were, to make a speedy end; and puts such Christians, instead of Worshiping Faintly, to cease Worshipping at all; its high time therefore at the first sight of such declining, which in our days is not the portion of a few; *for surely, surely, many there are in Churches, that in their solemnest Worship are quickly weary*; I say again, its high time that those that find the case thus with them, do even like the *Ninevites* at the preaching of *Jonah*; *They believed God, proclaimed a fast from the greatest to the least*; Jonah 3. 5. Even so let such go to their knees, humble themselves, and cry mightily that they perish not.

A barren heart to *Closet-work*, hath lost the principle part of a *Gospel Spirit*; the Kings Daughters chiefest glory being within, although her Clothing be of wrought gold: Outward services demonstrate our Religion to men, it is *Closet* services demonstrate it to God: he looks not as man looks; for man looks at the outward appearance, but he at the *heart*: and indeed this is not onely a Christians greatest duty, but his highest *Priviledge*, it alone setting the seal in his spirit to the truth of his Profession; when he can in secret appeal, and approve his heart to God-ward, that though no eye besides Gods eye see him, yet can truly say with the good Prophet *Isaiah* 26. 8. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.* When *Paul* and *Silas* were shut up in the innermost Prison from all the visible Society of Saints, they prayed and sang Praises unto God; though their feet were made fast in the Stocks, yet now most at liberty with their spirits, while least at liberty with their bodies, verefying the true Proverb, *When I am most alone, then I am least alone.* A Christian, if with God in Closet-work, though in a Wilderness, far from any other eye, hath most company then, and meat to eat that others know not of. Solemn Publick Worship in the Congregation of Christians is an especial duty, then they that fear the Lord, spake often one to another; but woe will be to this, if alone, that that will put a Crown upon the head of this, is the having the like frame and heart warmth in private personal Closet performances; he that is a Stranger here, his Palace will be a Dungeon, whilst a Dungeon is a Palace to that soul that can entertain heart-entercourse with God in secret places. Let me ask you Christians, and beg you ask your hearts; Are you as often as is possible in pub-

lick solemn Worship, and not usually there weary; but are you much oftner in Closet Worship, and there delight to be often: Can you goe burdened with trouble, powring out your souls to God in complaint into your Closets, and come forth like Age renewed: When and how often have you experienced that blessed word *Isaiah* 40.29. *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he encreaseth strength?* If this in truth be your state you are not under the power of this dying sign. O how many Professors are there now in *England*, it is to be feared that are great strangers in Closet Worship, not onely in that solemn part of Gods service, quickly weary, but are gone further back to *Egypt*, seldom or not at all in that worship, let this be matter of lamentation, for it will end in desolation. Now the Causes of this Decay seem to be these three,

1. Self-conceitedness that we know enough.
2. Luke-warmness in our Religion.
3. Unaprness to personal Duties, which being heeded may serve as helps to remove this decay where begun, or prevent where like to come.

1. Self-conceitedness that we know enough; now this comes to pass either,

1. Through Ignorance of what we ought to know, or,
2. Through Carelesness to put into practice what we do know.

1. Through ignorance of what we ought to know; a man may be very tall in knowledge in his own opinion, and at the same time a very Novice in knowledg: a large notion in the brain, and a little depth in the understanding, it is very evident to the experience of many Christians, that a great part of our time and study may be, and hath been spent in feeding

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ing upon Ashes in geting a more remote knowledg of things, while a more personal essential knowledg hath not been our study. Now this is a grand Engine of the Devil to teach us to fill up all the spaces of our time with matters less material, and to study all the Mathematicks, and be able to give an account of the nature and vertue of many Vegetables, while a stranger to the chief part of knowledg, *Nosce teipsum*, or know thy self. Alas what will it avail us to be able to tell all the diseases of our Neighbours body, and cannot tell one disease of our own heart: what book can we better study than the *BOOK OF SELF*, there we may read all our natural frailties, and all our sinful deformities; yea, know by this study, how often we have been sick in *Person*, and how much oftener sick in *action*: What more hard than to know our selves, and what more easie than to deceive our selves: Did we but study the frailty of our lives, and the frailties of our manners at best whilst we live, we should live much more like those that know their foundation is in the *Dust*, at their best state altogether *Vanity*, their life but a span, a Weavers shuttle, a hands breadth, a vapour, a nothing, till the Resurrection. Now ignorance in these chief concerns makes us so soon weary in our most solemn Worship; we little consider to day at *Prayer*, to morrow at the *Grave*; ignorance of our frail state makes us little prepare for our immortal state. Did the Daughters of *Sion*, *Isaiah* 3.16. that are haughty, and walk with stretched-out necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they goe, and making a tinkling with their feet, but study self knowledg, that they carry up and down with them (even while they walk with stretched-out necks and wanton eyes) four Sinks or Channels to cleanse nature by; and a stop to any of these Channels would

quickly prove destruction unto them. Where would upon such self-knowledg any room be for this pride: O Christians be less studious in the knowledg of what will little avail in the great Day: Study, study while it is called to day the *knowledg* of what you ought to know.

But secondly this Self-conceitedness comes through a negligent carelesness to put into practice what we do know. Persons are very apt to complain of their ignorance of plain duties, yea as though they were holden and hindred from the knowledg of them, though the promise is full, *then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord:* his going forth is prepared for such as the bright beams of the Sun-shine in the Morning: *If thou criest after knowledg, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God, Prov.* 2. 3,4,5. Here is a double defect, we are not as laborious for knowledge as for silver, for which gain we will rise up early, and goe to bed late, and eat the bread of painfulness. Neither do we make it our chief care, to be still as we gain in knowledg, putting it into practice the way to make profitable dispatch of business is to end one before we begin another, remembring this true Proverb, *The way to know more is to do that we know*; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I might have received my own with advantage.

But I shall proceed with a second cause of this decay, namely this, A luke-warmness in Religion. that is so indifferent to solemn Worship, that we care not whether we go forward or backward. When persons are come to this pass Gospel-work hath little Authority with them, they are easily carried another way;

way; A ſhower of rain, an aking head, a faint fit, a cold froſty morning, and twenty ſuch trifling occaſions will appear ground enough to damp our devotion. Many Chriſtians now adayes are too too ready to fulfil the complaint of old. *Ephraim* is like a ſilly Dove without a heart. A work to do, but no heart to do it. A man without heart is like a Cupboard without meat. It is no ſatisfaction to hunger to ſee an emty Table. This Luke-warm ſpirit is deſperately threatned in Scripture, *Rev.* 3. 15. 16. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert either cold or hot, ſo then becauſe thou art lukewarm I will ſpue thee out of my mouth.*

Thirdly, a third Cauſe of this decay, is unaptneſs to perſonal duties; every Profeſſor in order to his growing, hath perſonal duties conſtantly to carry about with him, aptneſs wherein fits him for publick imployment; but the contrary makes him unhandy or unskilful in the word of righteouſneſs; as children by vertuous education; or the unexpert Souldier by frequent diſcipline, are both made ready for manliker actions; even ſo, *aptneſs in perſonal duties, as Family and Cloſet Prayer, Family and Cloſet Reading*, a careful Exerciſe, and execution of thoſe choice and nearly concerned duties, with the addition of *frequent faſtings, watchings, humblings, patience, meekneſs, temperance, zeal, fear, love*, giving all *diligence*; for if theſe things be in you and abound, they make you that you ſhall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but he that lacketh theſe things is blind, and cannot ſee afar off: ſo briefly I paſs to the third ſign of decay in Godlineſs.

CHAP. III.

Briefly shewing the Reason of wearineſs to hear any Truth often, with three Cauſes of this Decay.

SIGN III.

WHen you care not to hear one matter often, though both eſſential and a ſuitable Truth.

By Often here, I would not be underſtood ſo, as that thoſe that preach ſhould day after day when they aſſemble without intermiſſion, preach the very ſame thing word for word to their hearers, for indeed this may give juſt occaſion of burthen to the hearer; therefore ſuch preaching up one truth in reſpect of the ſeaſon muſt ſurely be ſo obſerved, as to leave room for the making known other truths of equal neceſſity to be believed; therefore let the conſiderate Reader in this caſe conſtrue my words, as he upon another caſe judgeth he ought to conſtrue the holy Apoſtles words, *Often*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 26. *As often as you eat this bread*; *Often* here doth not in the leaſt intend, that not at all perſons be in this ſervice; neither doth it ſurely intend, that they do it every time they meet together, but ſo do it as it have its ſeaſon of being adminiſtred, and ſuch ſeaſon as may not extinguiſh, or leave no room for the adminiſtration of other Ordinances; ſo that by *Often* I would be underſtood, ſo frequent a preaching, the ſame Truth already known and believed, as ſtands with the wiſdom and judgment of perſons, that by God are entruſted to preach: with this alwayes premiſed, that as they ſee a poſſibility of any truth loſing its proper force in the memory and heart,

heart, through want of repetition. And when suitable truth upon this very score is over and over preached, and meets with such spirits as care not to hear it, that are mindless, careless and displeased; this bespeaks such to be of the *dying hand*; for indeed, such carriages withstand Gods ordinary method; which he frequently useth in Scripture to his own people in covenant with him; for two great ends, the one is, that they may *remember it*; the other is, that they may *do it*.

Is not one great end of many institutions imposed on *Israel* of old, and they found according to commandment in the same services yearly, lest they should forget what God would have them remember: and when they are pleased to choose them a King, it is Gods express charge, when he sitteth upon the Throne of his Kingdom, that he shall write him a Copy of the Law, and read therein all the dayes of his life; that he may learn to keep Gods word. The safety of this to the same people, that have already believed is plainly expressed, and faultiness in them that care not to hear it, plainly implyed; and one of the great ends I have noted, is also assigned in 1 *Cor.* 15. 1, 2. *Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.* Then he goeth on and sheweth the particulars he had preached to them, Principles even so plain in the Letter of them, that one would think they could not be forgotten; which strongly implies, that through want of preaching the same things to them again, they might either lose the bare knowledg of the Principles there laid down, or at least the spiritual force and nature of them; how then doth

this very Scripture reprove such as care not to hear a suitable truth often? charging them with faultiness in forgetting: that of all truth at best. they know but in part; and that by hearing one and the same truth again and again, a man may see some excellency further than yet he ever saw: experience will witness this to the considerate, *Psal.* 3. beginning.

Now this defect seems to arise from some wrong judgment or apprehensions, that such persons have of themselves; they are notionally conceited of some large reach they have in the knowledg of those very things they care not to hear; and this defect in them is occasioned through want of humble dependance upon God, and sensible feeling the Spirit of that word; *All my springs are in thee*, *Psal.* 87. *last.* Let any that find the case thus with them be intreated to be restless in themselves (not quiet or content) but pray earnestly to God, that he would both heal them from this foul distemper, and also forgive them for this great evil, of entertaining, or giving way to burden at hearing again, that that grace hath taught them to know already. This was that good Shepherd St. *Peters* great care, 2 *Pet.* 1. 12. 13, 15. *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you alwayes in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth; yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*; plainly implying that without a frequent repetition of the same truths, it was very easie not onely to lose the remembrance of them, but the spirit of them also. It was Gods method and express charge to *Moses*, that he should keep the memorial of the Passover from year to year in its continued season, such a year, such a moneth, such a day must the same Institution be revived and performed, plainly putting us in mind how

apt

apt we are to loſe the true remembrance and reliſh of an eſſentiall truth. How often Chriſtian hath thy heart been ſo warmed at the hearing of ſome truth, as to ſay with the two Diſciples, *Did not our hearts burn within us whileſt he talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures?* While the Miniſter hath been preaching hath not thy heart been burning, and thy mouth ready to ſay with *Iſrael*, *All that the Lord commands us we will* do, *and whether he ſends us we will* go! and yet the next aſſault by the want of bread or water haſt thou not alſo with *Iſrael* cried, *Wherefore hath the Lord brought us hither to die in this wilderneſs? would to God we had died in Egypt, where we had bread to the full.* How often do we behold ſpectacles of mortality carrying to their long homes, and though this is our high concern to lay it to heart, yet do we put the remembrance of them into the grave with them?

How often do we *pray*, *watch*, *faſt*, or *weep* the more, to behold the Meſſenger of death come ſo near our door? doth not rather the often repetition of this practical, and the other preceptive repetition of Gods Council turn to ſurfet or loathing at leaſt to a leſſening the very ſpiritual ſenſe and life that truly lodg in the veins of thoſe great inſtitutions. Now the Cauſes of this decay, which being duly heeded, may ſerve as remedies for recovery are theſe.

Firſt Decay in the ſpiritual appetite.

Secondly Ignorance of the great end of all Inſtitutions.

Thirdly, want of Spiritual digeſture.

Firſt, Decay in the ſpiritual appetite. When wholſome food is become loathſome, the fault is not in the meat, but in the man; ſuch a perſon wants phyſick; *The full ſoul* (ſaith *Solomon*) *loathes the honey-comb, but*

to

to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet. The stomach may be full under a double consideration; First from a real supply of food, this is both pleasant and profitable business. To be hungry is a mercy, and to have a supply to stay or satisfie this hunger is a double mercy. But secondly, a Stomach may be full and yet empty, meat enough but no appetite to it, through some decay or defect in the stomach. We see this in many persons, that may have what heart can wish, but desire faileth in them to their dainty dishes, now loathing what once they loved. We conclude when in this natural kind appetite faileth, a Consumption approacheth, and without speedy remedy will end in dissolution. It is counted in common less misery to want meat than to want appetite. Now when we have an essential and suitable Truth, and our ear itch to be gone, it is an evident sign of sickness at heart. And this may be, and yet the person very unsensible of it. *Thou sayest I am rich and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked, Rev.* 3. 17. Here is a dreadful deep decay, but so far are they from feeling it, that they say they are rich and have need of nothing. O Christians, woe be to us if once we are full; let us look to our spiritual appetite, daily hunger is a sign of daily health. My soul thirsteth for God as the Hart thirsteth for the water brooks; it was thus with *David*, the more he drank, the more he was athirst; the deeper the sweeter is the fountain of God: *Mat.* 5. 6. *Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst, for ye shall be filled.*

2. A second Cause of this decay may be this ignorance of the great end of all Institutions; no service of God but is special and appointed for special ends, and is profitable in the Use of it for Doctrine, for Reproof,

proof, for Correction, for Instruction in righteousnes, to this noble end, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished to all good works. Every service for God will be burthensome, if we are ignorant of the great end of that service; we should never go to hear Gods Word, but should carry along with us knowledg of the two great ends of that Institution, his own Honour, and our Eternal Good: this will be like a large Mornings walk by a pleasant river side, it will cause an apetite to wholsome food with *David*, to say my soul longeth for God. The least Nail in Gods Temple hath its meaning, and did we study the meaning of all Appointments, we should with *Curius* thirst long for the time of Gods unfolding them. The worth of a Precept where men perish for want of counsel is best known, the sweet that is lodged in every Promise is onely understood by the needy soul: and the advantage that may be gathered by a Threatning is best known to such, as carry daily up and down with them the feeling sense and weight of eternal miscarrying.

3. A third Cause of this Decay, is want of Spiritual Digesture: Customary Meals are a great burden to the soul that hath an ill Digesture; it is a certain symptome of a foul stomach, when the food rests and corrupts there, not turning to usual nourishment such persons are listless, dull, heavy, and slow of motion, running towards an apparent decay, which is demonstrated by their thin visage, faint spirit, feeble knees, and trembling joynts, hollow eyes, inward speech. No Mother can look upon her Son in this case, but with deep lamentation, and utmost diligence to obtain remedy, with a feeling sense of that fatal consequence that will attend so sad a disease, crying out, except speedy release God will write me childless.

Now

Now there is in the natural Body truly diſtinguiſhed two kinds of Digeſtures, both undue, yet both very applicatory to the work in hand, one is when the food digeſts ſo eaſily, that it hath not turned to nouriſhment, the Cud cheweth not; it paſſed through in in the ſame nature and kind as it was received in, not remaining in the ſtomach a due time for ſpace to turn to nouriſhment. Another is, when it lieth too long, and ſo corrupts in the ſtomach; theſe are true Emblems of an ill ſpiritual digeſture, when the word heard goes as it comes, takes not root downwards, nor bringeth fruit upwards, or elſe it is received, and ſtayeth undigeſted into a ſuitable practice, not anſwering the end for which it was ſent: It bringeth forth, but it is briars and thorns, envying and ſtrife; one of *Paul*, and another of *Apollo*, another of *Sephas*, and another of Chriſt: the word is heard by all, but not rightly digeſted by many.

CHAP. IV.

Briefly ſhewing how want of humility and charity in hearers, cauſeth them diſlike what is preached.

SIGN IV.

When few Sermons will pleaſe you, either you like not Matter, or Manner, or Man, or Place.

When Perſons come to this decay, that they not onely are weary to hear one matter often, but few Sermons pleaſe them; they are then ready to throw off all, and it is uſually known by this very character in Sign, *viz.* They will either find ſome fault with the matter;

matter; or else dislike the manner, or else the man, or the place; and wherever this is found in person or persons, without just occasion given them, such certainly cannot stand long in their Profession, without penitent reformation.

Let but hearers, when they come to Sermons, leave charity behind them, how easily may they disturb themselves and others in one of these cases; As for matter, will they not reply, it it such as I know already as well as the Minister can tell me; otherwise it is but poor weak ordinary matter: and as to the manner, will they not reply, either he speaks too high, or too loud, that they like not; or in their account not high enough, too low that they like not; otherwise in their account, too fast or too slow, and all this they like not.

Now as to the man, this being first premised, he is one that hath ordinary approbation and seal from Heaven to his Ministry, in the bringing through grace sinners to conversion; why as to such a man, they dislike him, and manifest their dislike; yet being asked can give no reason; nay it is probable to say truly, they cannot tell why they dislike him, but yet they do, they are not free to hear such a man. Is not this a silly weakness got among some Professors, the good Lord undeceive and humble such: surely it's possible for some to shew dislike in some, or all these cases, and as little cause for it, as *Corah* and his Company, had to dislike as they did, *Moses* and *Aaron*, Numb. 16. 3. *They gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said to them, ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation is holy, every one of them; and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up your selves above the the Congregation of the Lord.* How causeless this carriage was from *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*;

Abiram, with two hundred and fifty Princes, the Lord from Heaven in a way not common diſcovers, they that die, die not the common death of all men, as that Chapter fully ſhews; ſo heinous was their ſin in Gods account, to murmur againſt his ſervants without a cauſe: And is it then a new thing, that ſuch be in Churches now under this decaying ſign, of diſliking matter, manner, or man? was not this very ſpirit got into the *Corinth* Church, and bold even to ſhew it ſelf againſt the holy man St. *Paul*, that had begotten them to the faith, 2 Epiſt. 10. *For his Letters*, ſay they, *are weighty and powerful, but his bodily preſence weak, and his ſpeech contemptible.* Here they were not ſparing to vent themſelves; the ſmall cauſe they had, yea the unreaſonableneſs of that their diſlike, let the conſiderate judge, whoſe conſcience is not aſleep. Again in 1 *Cor.* 4. ſuch a like ſpirit diſcovers it ſelf, after ſo ungracious a rate, as that Wiſe-man's reply will evidence, in *verſe* 3. *But with me it is a very ſmall thing, that I ſhould be judged of you, or mans judgment*; they account the Apoſtles fools, themſelves wiſe, the Apoſtles weak, themſelves ſtrong; by all this, without adding what Scriptures more might be added, it is very evident, if we will take the holy Spirits teſtimony, that ſuch perſons under this very ſign were in the Apoſtles dayes; and doth not alſo the teſtimony of a good conſcience ſay, there are ſuch even now?

It is very poſſible for ſome tempers to find fault, or pick as it were a quarrel at one thing or another in the Ordinance of Preaching even as it were to create occaſion. There is a diſeaſe attends ſome perſons that will not be pleaſed, it is next to impoſſible to gratifie them to content; neither *Barnabas* nor *Bonargis* will ſatisfie. This Sign takes notice of four Complaints. Here is a hand of Divine Providence throws a

ſtone;

ſtone; Deſigns good in its fall where it reſteth, the hand is not diſcerned, nor regarded, namely the end wherefore the ſtone is thrown, but by and by like the thorney ground, Hearers, offence is taken, and ſeveral complaints are brought in againſt the ſtone, but no regard is ſtill had to the hand that threw the ſtone; one Complaint is, the Matter is not liked, it is ſome truth they know already, their ears itch at this, and they want ſome Novelty. This is truly emblem'd in wanton Children, who are ſo full fed they know not what to eat, but are ready to nauceate thoſe Dainties that their poor Neighbours Children would leap at the remnants of. This Diſeaſe in the ſpiritual and natural Body is a fore-runner both of a Famin of Bread, and of the hearing the Word of God. Another Complaint is againſt the manner of delivery; we are got ſo far perhaps that we will not take offence at the matter, but the manner; ſomething is to be ſaid againſt that; it was not diſhed up in ſuch a Dreſs, with ſuch a Voice and Preſence as liked this full ſtomach: thus the Manner is quarrelled at. Another Complaint is againſt the Man; you like perhaps the Matter and Manner, but it is ſuch a Man, for whom you have little charity, and as little cauſe perhaps: but ſo it is you like not the Man, all this while the Devil's Trade goes on, if he can bring you to quarrel at Matter, Manner, Man, or Place; ſo you loſe the profit he gains his End, and God loſeth his Honour: Profeſſors look to your hearts here, and lay aſide theſe excuſes. or quit your Profeſſion; examine if you live up to that mean Matter you account you heard this day; examine if the Manner will ſtand in Gods ſight, for you to contend againſt to your own loſs. And for the Man, examine in your own ſpirit, whoſe Ox or Aſs hath he taken, while he is robbing perhaps himſelf

himself and his to do you service for this requital. Give Christ Jesus leave to speak here a concluding word, *Matt.* 11. 16, 17, 18, 19. *But whereunto shall I liken this Generation, 'tis like unto Children sitting in the Market, and calling to their fellows, saying, we have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a Devil; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and ye say, behold a man gluttonous, a wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and sinners; but let me tell you this, that wisdom is justified of her Children.*

Object. What Causes may be assigned for this Decay?

Ans. These two.

First, Want of Humility.

Secondly, Want of Charity.

First, Want of Humility. The humble Soul where ever he comes he is so debased at his own worthlesness and undone state, that the meanest morsel, if really bread, is mercy to him, he can feed heartily upon pulse, and look fair with it, and is thankful, finding matter for praise, and none for repining, his humiliation leads him to contentedness, and his contentedness to thankfulness; the lower he lies, the more he thrives. It is a famous Instance which Doctor *Taylor* gives us of the Duke of *Conde*. I have read (saith he) that when the Duke of *Conde* had entred voluntarily into the incommodities of a Religious Poverty, he was one day espied, and pitied by a Lord of *Italy*, who out of tenderness wished him to be more careful and nutritive of his person. The good Duke answered, Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I am ill provided of conveniencies; for I send an Harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings every

every night, and takes care that I be royally entertained. The Lord asked him; who was his Harbinger, he answered, The knowledge of my self, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; and when with this knowledg I arrive at my lodging, how unprovided soever I find it, me thinks it is ever better than I deserve. Oh! let us alwayes remember, all is well on this side hell.

But secondly, Want of Charity, It is a true Proverb, *Love maketh the Law easie.* What Sermon, or Person, or Place may not a man find occasion to quarrel at, if he comes to it without charity. Charity, saith the blessed Apostle bears all things, its Contrary bears nothing; Charity covereth a multitude of sins, its Contrary multiplies aggravations of sins; Charity thinketh no ill, its Contrary thinketh nothing else but ill; Charity puts the best interpretation upon all actions, its contrary puts the worst: nothing liker God, than Charity, for God is love; nothing liker the Devil than its Contrary: Love wrought with God, when we deserved no pity, to send his dear Son full of pity; love to our misery made him lose his life to save ours. When I saw thee in thy blood to the loathing of thy person, I said unto thee, live; that time was the time of love, *Ezekiel* 16. *He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, that with his stripes we might be healed, Isaiah* 5.3. Christians, wou'd you get from under this decay; Doth few Sermons either as to Matter, Manner, or Man, please you; get into the spirit of love, that will give grains of allowance, that will put the best construction upon every action, when Preaching, Hearing, Contention ceaseth, yea when these glorious lights of Faith and Hope hath done shining, then will love be in its greatest lustre, 1 *Cor.*13.13.

CHAP. V.

Containing five Causes of deceitful thinking we know enough; with four marks to know when we are under that deceit.

SIGN V.

When you think you know enough.

The greatness of this defect, and the danger of it may be seen, if something be premised and considered. When you think you know enough; that is, you are grown so tall in the knowledge of God, and the Ordinances of his House, the way to his Kingdom; the strength of your adversaries, the Flesh, World, and Devil, and the plague of your own heart; for all this must be premised, as being in such persons as think they know enough; if their thoughts be not gross deceit, and then what need of Hearing or Assembling, or crying after knowledg, or lifting up the voice for understanding? Is not this gross deceit grown somewhat common, but of dangerous tendency, to knock both heart and hand from off the means God hath ordained to encrease and sanctifie knowledge? Is not such a conceit the road way to Atheism? Were it not gotten among some sleepy Christians in the Apostles time? Doth not that saying, 1 *Cor.* 8. 2, 3. directly aim at such? *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him:* As much as if the Apostle should say, you think you know much, truly if you know so much as that you *love God*, you are known of him; and if you know this, you know what you can know in this life; but if you know not this, you know nothing yet as you ought to know.

know, whatever you think of your selves: and therefore look to it. that you love God, and dwell not about this or that tall conceit of your knowledge; but if you or any man love him, the same is known of him: And this I shall humbly add, if any man love God, the same hath learned to think soberly or meanly of himself.

But the danger of this appears further, if we consider, that some for being under this dying Sign, were about to be spewed out of Gods mouth, *Revel.* 3. 17. *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing*; (yet art so ignorant) or *knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.* How doth the holy spirit illustrate to us the miserable estate of this People, under this dying Sign? *Wretched*, one would think that enough; yet he adds *Miserable*, and that is not enough to set it out, but they are *Poor, Blind,* and *Naked*; in a word, they are quite the contrary to what they think of themselves, and what is in growing Christians.

It is a true Character of a gracious growing Soul, he never thinks he knows enough of the deceitfulness of *his own heart*; the other knowledge it is that cometh under this dying Sign. This knowledg encreaseth *humility*, the other encreaseth *pride*: 'Tis certain that persons under this conceit that they know enough do little study their *own heart*, which is *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.* I the Lord search the heart, plainly implying, that when we have studied all our dayes the knowledg of our hearts, we shall still be but Children in that knowledg. It is one of the Lords Prerogatives, both to know the heart and search it. Therefore when God had said the heart is deceitful above all things, who

can know it, he gives this Resolution, No mortal man can, *I the Lord search it.* Christians may very truly discern the difference between spiritual and carnal knowledg, the Pulse of the one beating strongly to a large attainment in *knowledge* for *knowledge sake*, the other as diligent to increase in knowledge for practise sake; the one the more he *knows* himself, the more he *loaths* himself; the other the more he *knows* himself, the more he falls *in love* with himself; Ah Christians, if † we know God in his *greatness*, so as to *fear* him, and in his goodness so far as to *love* him, and in his *mercy* so much as to be *thankful*, and in his *justice* so much as to be *humble*; this will lead us into the study of our self to that degree of self-acknowledgment with good *David*, *Psalms* 119, 120. *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

Now I shall with Gods help shew some causes of this Deceit; you may think you know enough.

First, when you measure what you know by your own eyes or light; you do think so, not measuring what you know by the Rule of Knowledge, the Word of God, 1 *Cor* 10. 12. *For we dare not make our selves of the number, or compare our selves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves with themselves, by comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*, Prov. 30 12. *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet not washed from their filthiness.*

By these Texts you may see what miserable judgment men will make of things, when they walk by the light of their own eyes, contrary to God's express charge, *Deut.* 12. 8. *You shall not do after all things we do here this day, every man what is right in his own eyes.*

Secondly, Another Cause may be this, when you measure what you know by what once you did know; not

not considering that further knowledg forceth further light, and calls for proportionable practise: *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things.*

Thirdly, When you measure what you know, by seeing others that profess they know, do as they do, *Tit.* 1. 16. *They profess they know God, but in works they deny him.* Other mens actions must no further be a rule for us, notwithstanding their knowledg, then as their actions accord with Gods Word, the rule of knowledg.

Fourthly, When you measure what you know, by what you are disposed to practice, or do; men pick and choose what Commands they will observe, and how to observe them, in our dayes: Some Commands suit more with the nature and disposition of persons than other Commands do; they that cannot endure *Drunkenness*, can give way to *passion*; they that cannot endure *Uncleanness*, can give way to *Covetousness*; but as the victory is glorious when gotten over, what was most difficult; so measuring what we know, not by what we are disposed to doe; but what God commands us to doe is the truest way or rule to measure by; for the carnal man will make the Law of Nations his guide, the moral man the Ten Commandments his guide; the Antichristian man the false Spirit his guide; and all measure themselves by their guide: but the undeceived Christian man makes Gods Word his guide, and measures what he knows, by his walking like that; *To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this* Word, *'tis because there is no light in them*, Isa. 8. 20.

Fifthly, When you measure not what you know, by what God in his Word calls you personally to do, when those especial Commands that lie upon you; as *Husband to Wife, Wife to Husband, Father to Child,*

Child to Father, Master to Servant, Servant to Master, are left undone, or so lamely done, that they are full of cracks and flaws; the Religion of such is vain, and contrary comparisons to this, as vain and deceitful. This was the evil of the Scribes and Pharisees, they minded *Annis* and *Cummin*, but *neglected judgment, mercy*, and *faith, the weightier matters of the Law*: all doings are shews without substance, while the weightier matters are left undone, *James* 1. 26. *If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, he deceives his own heart; this mans Religion is in vain*: Consider this in the fear of God.

Object. But how may we know we are deceived with this deceit.

Ans. First, When you have a low value of those means, that under God first brought you to know: Is not a Sermon a low thing with you? this and that Preacher, that one was high in your account, now weak and mean in your esteem? *Now you are full, now you are rich, and have raigned as Kings without us: I would to God you did raign, that we also might raign with you*, 1 Cor. 4. 8.

Secondly, When you are mighty prodigal of what you know, thinking no matter well managed, that you have not most voice in, Prov. 15. 2. *The tongue of the wise useth knowledg aright, but the mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness.* So Prov. 29. 11. *The fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in while afterwards.*

Thirdly, When you please your self with the thoughts that few or none in knowledg outstrip you, having a secret scorn to compare your selves with any; that is, when you think none is able to say more to a Text of Scripture, than you have done; or knows the holy spirits mind more than your selves,

Jer.

Jer. 8. 8. *We are wise,* (We by way of singularity,) *and the Law of the Lord is with us:* At the same time God saith, *What wisdom is in them?*

Fourthly, When in all matters material, you are not careful to take counsel of God, before you bring them to action, Prov. 15. 28. *The heart of the wise studieth to answer, but the mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness.* And Chap. 3. 6. *In all thy wayes acknowledg him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

CHAP. VI.

Containing in it Christian aptness, through weakness, to neglect coming to Christs Table; with a short description of offences, that seemingly may hinder; and three Causes of this Decay.

SIGN. VI.

When a small occasion will keep you from Christs Table, or comunion with the Church of God.

By Christs Table here, I would be understood Christ Jesus his own institution the night he was betrayed; which he set on foot to his Penitent, Believing, Baptized Disciples, 1 *Cor.* 11. 23, 24. *For I have received of the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said; Take, eat. this is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me; And after the same manner he took the Cup, when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my blood; This do, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.*

These Scriptures prove it to be Christ Jesus his own institution, and therefore a duty for his people to be found in often.

But it being somewhat beside the business in hand, to treat in particular of all the uses and ends of this blessed institution, my work here is to be instrumental, if the Lord will, to deter believers upon some occasions that they have taken, to neglect this duty that is weighty, and not to be omitted or abused, as they will answer Christ Jesus, who is ready to take an account; it being that Ordinance that doth in a most lively manner express the certainty of his suffering, in his body being broken, and his blood poured out, that he might finish the work of mans Redemption, and remain at the Fathers right hand, Mediator hetween God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, against all the opposition of that corrupt Spirit, that seeks in our dayes to disparage and extinguish this blessed Ordinance, thereby to root out of mens understandings the certainty of Christ Jesus being a personal fleshly substance; and so converting him into a Spirit, contrary to this saying of his, after his resurrection; *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is my self, handle me and see, for a Spirit hath not flesh and bone as you see me have,* Luke 24. 39. Acts 1. 9, 10, 11. The necessity of believing this is evidenced by the sad consequence of the contrary, for denying Christ Jesus to be a fleshly substance, and converting him into a Spirit, any Spirit, or every Spirit; and so in truth deny the Christ of God; And then blind, injudicious men, may form to themselves, and world, what they will fancy to call their Christ: This premised to the Explication of the Lords Table.

Now when a small occasion will hinder us from this Service, it is a certain mark of decay in the Power

Power of Godliness, and that the Authority of the Person that gave Being to this Truth, and the great end and uses of this Service have little presence *in our hearts*: What Friend can behold his Friend, not onely weep for him, but bleed for him; not onely bleed for him till a fainting fit, but till death seize on every part, and put a perfect period to his Life, and not weep with him, yea and bleed with him, yea and dye with him? Our Lord Jesus saith, peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die, much more with such a common good man that is innocent, and dies for a fellow good man that is guilty; surely who would forbear to die with such a one. Rom.

But this is not a sufficient Parallel to the work before us: Here is not a Friend dying for his Friend; but here is one that never did sin, *neither was guile found in his mouth*, crying out, *my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, beset with a bitter agony, sweating as it were great drops of *Blood*, a man of *Sorrows*, and acquainted with Griefs, oppressed, and afflicted, and bruised; then taken from Prison, and from Judgment; his hair pulled off, *his visage marred more than any mans*, his face spit on, his head crowned with thorns, his hands and his feet nailed to a *Cross*, a *Spear* thrust into *his side*, and his whole Body fixt on a Tree in a bitter torturing manner, for three full hours together he remains in deep anguish, so that the Vail of the Temple at *Jerusalem* was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the *Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves open'd, and many dead bodies came out of their Graves, and appear'd unto many, and darkness was upon the whole Earth for that three hours*, and the Keepers tremble, and become as dead men, and fear with anguish came upon all flesh, and in this bitter

bitter Agony he cries out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Come now and let me take thee by the hand, my Christian friend, and we will walk to *Emaus*, and talk as we go of what hath happened; surely it will make us *sad*; for the person on whom this Tragedy was acted, *was one Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.* But who will believe this report, and to whom is this arm of the Lord revealed? for he was thus wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, that with his stripes we might be healed: All we like sheep have gon astray, and have turned every one into his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(US ALL) is a word of great emphasis, worthy to be enquired into: Who this *Us all* meaneth, I shall tell you, and the Good Lord open your eyes, that you may tell your selves; it is *Transgressors, Rebels, Traitors, Enemies in their minds*; It is *Sauls*, great *Persecutors*, *Mary Magdelenes*, in whom were *seaven Devils*; it is *Manasses, Charmers, Sorcerers, Blasphemers, Swearers, Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, Revilers, Extortioners*, and such like, Worshippers of Idol Gods made of Wood and Stone. So that here is not a Friend dying for his Friend, nor a Child for his Father, nor a Brother for his Brother, nor a Servant for his Master, nor a Subject for his Prince, but here is *the Son of God, the Lord of Life and Glory* coming from the bosom of God, taking upon himself a contemptible life, and a cursed, painful, and shameful death upon the Cross, that he might redeem these very persons from the wrath of God and pangs of Hell to all eternity, where otherwise deservedly they must have been alwayes dying, yet alwayes

living

living in endless flames, *gnawing* their tongues for pain, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth in that place prepared of old, the pile whereof is fire and brimstone, where their worm *never dieth*, and their fire *never goeth out*, but remains tormented for *ever and ever* with the *Devil* and his Angels, from which state this blessed Son of God delivers, and proclaims the greatness of this his love to every sinner, and hath instituted this great service in remembrance of this his bitter Passion, that such for whom he drank this bitter Cup might shew forth this his death till he shall come the second time without sin to salvation. Can any then cast their eye upon the person, worth, and wounds of this bleeding love, and not fall in love, yea be sick with love after daily Communion with such a one? What can such thus redeem'd from this great woe, by this great Lord, to such a great state, as to be called the adopted Sons and Daughters of God, and yet let a small occasion keep them from communion with their Lord and his redeemed, and not be under deep decay? &c.

For any therefore to estrange themselves from Christ's Table, it being no less than a refusing the food he hath prepared; because things go not just as they would have them, doth greatly argue the lett to be in themselves though not by such heeded; they being great wanderers abroad in the wayes of others; perhaps more busying themselves than they ought, and yet as great strangers at home to self-examination, and due personal preparation, which where ever it is, is that indeed that so warrantably calls persons to come to Christ Jesus's Feast, of *Bread* and *Wine*, purchased with his *Blood*; that negligence therein will prove no less than their great sin.: What is it therefore that should keep us from that service, wherein by faith

we

we are to feed, as it were upon the flesh of the Son of God? *Whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed.* Truly nothing but self-unworthiness or unpreparedness: Surely, surely, the spiritual growing Christian, whose hungrings and thirstings are after hourly communion with Jesus Christ, can better forgo his natural food a thousand times, than yield to a lett from this performance: Let us therefore examine our selves, that we are meet subjects, *discerning the Lords Body, and so let us eat that Bread, and drink that Cup.*

Now the Causes of this decay, or yielding upon small occasions, to absent from Christs Table, may be these three.

First, Too great Ignorance who are the Subjects Christ calls to this Service.

Secondly, Too too great aptness to be easily provoked.

Thirdly, Want of love to Jesus Christ, the Author of this Service.

First, Too great Ignorance who are the Subjects Christ calls to this Service; which consists in a misconstruing his general invitation to all penitent, believing baptized Disciples, who have had an orderly admittance thus far, and by way of Precept are enjoyned both to come to this Service, and continue in it; *The same day were added to the Church three thousand souls, and they continued stedfast in the Apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer:* it is peculiarly unto such appointed and sanctified, that they may keep in remembrance their Lord and Saviour's Passion. *So often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lords death till he come.* But I would not be mistaken here, as that I mean, the *outward badge* of these onely, makes right Subjects for *Christ's Call;*

Call; yet this *outward* must be, but *wo* to it when it is alone: The Kings Daughter is to be all glorious within, as well as her garment of wrought gold: The hungerer and thirster after his supply, that sensibly sees all his springs to be in him; and as the Hart panteth after the brooks of water, hath his soul crying. Oh when shall I come and appear before him? negligence to be thus fitted, causeth ignorance of Christs Call.

But secondly, Too too great aptness to be easily provoked: Some Christians are so weak, that they will be still forming discontent to themselves, ill interpreting others actions, and straining at every Gnat, which generally comes through weakness in judgment, and unaptness to be busying themselves with their high Calling, and the worth of Gods gracious priviledges afforded them; by which means the inward man is too much raked or made raw, and so apt to smart at every little touch; as special care therefore must be had in Churches, that none give just offence; so that none upon too light account take offence; for it doth but argue such Children or Babes in Christianity, and greatly rob themselves of that spiritual refreshing strength, that otherwise might be their present portion, and fill their heart with disquieting thoughts to the hindring their spiritual appetite from taking in that rich refreshment, Christ Jesus Table is furnisht with for every prepared Guest.

But Thirdly, Want of love to Jesus Christ, the Author of this Service; All those motives that provoke the heart to love Jesus Christ, should be active now; *viz.* The greatness of his love to purchase this Service for us, with no less price than his precious blood; the smalness of our desert to procure this; together with the high priviledges it signifies us heirs unto: *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that*

we

we should be called, (or accounted) *the Sons of God, who were before without Christ,* &c. *But now made nigh through the blood of Christ.* How should this provoke our fervent love to him, to be crying out with the Spouse in the Canticles; *My beloved is fair and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.* Certainly, my friends, were our hearts truly spiritual, we could not choose but see singular desert in Jesus Christ; calling for the greatest of our love, in a holy affection to the injoying of him, and making us prefer our communion with him in this service, before all things that in this world may challenge our dearest respect: It must needs therefore follow, that want of love makes way for small occasions to keep us from Christ's Table; I shall leave this to consideration, and pass to the seventh Sign of a dying Christian.

CHAP. VII.

Shewing the great decay to Christianity, when mindless to Prayer; with a plain discovery of the Necessity, Excellency, Lets, and Helps to Prayer, in sixteen Particulars, with four Directions as to the Manner of our approaches to God in this service, and what we are to do after Prayer.

SIGN VII.

When you have usually no great mind to Prayer.

When a Christian is mindless of this bosome, blessed, intimate service of Prayer, which is a drawing nigh to, and talking with the great Lord God Almighty; here is then ground enough to conclude his state, and his decay very great. Now in Prayer there is considerable.

First,

First, The Necessity of Prayer.
Secondly, The Excellency of Prayer.
Thirdly, Lets to Prayer.
Fourthly, Helps to Prayer.

First, The necessity of Prayer appears from the Command of God, 1 *Thes.* 5. 7. *Pray without ceasing*; Col. 4. 21. *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving*; 1 Phil. 4. 6. *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thansgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

Secondly, It appears from example, 1 Sam. 12. 23. *God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you*; Psal. 55. 27. *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray*; Dan. 6. 10. *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did at other times.*

Thirdly, the Necessity appears from the importunity that goeth along with prayer, *Luke* 22. 44. *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly*, Luke 6. 12. *And it came to pass in those dayes, that he went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God*: Acts 12. 5. *Peter therefore was kept in Prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church to God for him*: Luke 11. 8, 9. *I say to you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*

Secondly, The Excellency of Prayer, appears in this,

First, It engageth Gods strength.
Secondly, It holds with holy reverence Gods hands.
Thirdly, In no condition we can be barred from it.

For the first, *Exod.* 17. 11. *And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed*; and when

when he let down his hands, the Amalekites prevailed, Josh. 10. 12, 13, 14. *Then spake Joshua (or prayed to the Lord) in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the Children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou Moon upon the Valley of Ajalon; and the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies; and there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkned to the prayer of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.*

Secondly, Prayers Excellency appears in this, it holds with holy reverence Gods hands, *Exod.* 32. 9. 10, 11, 12. *And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people; Now therefore let me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of thee a great Nation. And Moses besought the Lord, saying, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot, turn I pray thee and repent of this evil against them,* Numb 14. 11. 22. *And the Lord said to Moses, how long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me? now therefore let me alone that I may destroy them.*

Thirdly, Prayers Excellency appears, in that in no condition we can be barred from it, *Daniel* in the Lions Den, *Chap.* 6. *Jonah* in the Whales Belly, *Chap.* 1. 2. *Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God out of the Fishes Belly, and said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me: out of the belly of Hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice:* so *Paul* and *Silas* in Prison prayed, and sang praises to God, and the Prisoners heard them.

Now we come to Lets to Prayer, *i.e.* what hinders Prayer from prevailing with God.

First, Presumption in an unreverent adventuring before the Lord, 2 *Chron.* 14 and 20. 33. &c. *For as*

yet

yet the people had not prepared their heart unto the God of their Fathers, therefore thus will I do unto thee O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God O Israel, Amos 4. 12.

A second lett or hinderance to Prayer is, wandring thoughts, *Jer.* 4. 14. *O Jerusalem wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou maist be saved, how long shall thy vain thoughts lodg within thee?* Therefore take no thought saying; what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be cloathed? but seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, *Mat.* 6. 32, 33.

The third lett to Prayer is bosom sin, or pleasant delight in some secret lust, *Psal.* 66. 8. *If I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear me.* Josh. 7. 8, 9. 10, 11. *The Lord saith to Joshua, get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face; Israel have sinned, they have also transgressed my Covenant, which I have commanded them; for they have taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen and dissembled; and they have put it also among their own stuff, therefore they could not stand before their Enemies, but turned their backs.* This good man *Joshua* in Chap 10. 12. at another time is so prevalent at prayer, that the Sun and Moon stands still; yet now in his seventh Chapter, because there is some bosom sin in the Camp, he cannot prevail till this is removed.

A fourth lett is, want of reconciliation to brethren, *Mat.* 5. 23, 24. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the Altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother,* Mat. 6. 12. *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debters; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive ye your trespasses.*

A fifth lett is deſpairing doubts of being anſwered, *Jam.* 1. 5, 6. *If any man lack wiſdom, let him ask it of God that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing doubting, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the ſea, driven with the wind, and toſſed; let not that man think he ſhall receive any thing at the hand of the Lord. Whatſoever ye ſhall ask in my name, believe that ye ſhall receive it, and ye ſhall receive it*, Mark 11. 24.

We ſhall now ſpeak of Helps to Prayer; for ſaith ſome, I would, but I cannot pray, I want words, all that I can do is to ſigh; for a Help to this.

Firſt, labour to get a feeling of the neceſſity and excellency of Prayer, ſo as that thy heart goeth under a grievous burthen, becauſe thou canſt not pray, *Jer.* 5. 3. *O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth, thou haſt ſtricken them, but they are not grieved.* Here the Prophet complains, that though Iſrael are ſtricken, ſmitten, and afflicted, yet they have not grieved; clearly implying, that a grieved, burthened ſtate at the ſenſe of want, is a fair ſtep in the way to obtain ſupply, *Pſal.* 38 4, 6. *For mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me; I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; caſt thy burthen upon the Lord, and he ſhall ſuſtain thee*, Pſal. 55. 22.

Secondly, ſtudy much how to get deep ſenſe of your our great wants of Gods daily help; *All my ſprings are in thee; Without me you can do nothing: For in him we live, move, and have our being* Acts 17. 27, 28.

Thirdly, Conſider God hath provided no way for you to acquaint him with your wants, but prayer, and if you cannot pray, how will you make your wants known to God, *Phil.* 4. 6. *In every thing by prayer and ſupplication with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made*

know

known unto God, 2 Chron. 26. *Uzzia ſought God in the dayes of Ezra, and as long as he ſought the Lord, God made him to proſper : Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorifie me*, Pſal. 50. 15. Hoſ. 5. 15.

Fourthly, Conſider that all your outward mercies become bleſſings through Prayer, 1 *Tim.* 4. 5, 6. *For every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is ſanctified by the Word of God and Prayer: Give us this day our daily bread; When Jeſus had made the multitude ſit down upon the ground, he looked up to heaven, and gave thanks*; or ſaid grace, as the old tranſlations read it.

Ffthly, Conſider what a miſerable condition will yours be, if caſt into the Lions Den, Whales Belly, or Stocks, if you cannot pray : *They poured out their ſupplications when thy chaſtning was upon them.*

Sixthly, Intreat Jeſus Chriſt to teach you to pray, *Luke* 11. 1. *And it came to paſs, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceaſed, one of his Diſciples ſaid unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John alſo taught his Diſciples* : as the Lord commands us to do, ſo he muſt help us to Pray *Ezek.* 36. 37.

But I ſhall cloſe this with a brief Caution about the practical part of Prayer, beſeeching you that you would labour with all your might, after theſe few things.

Firſt, Get your hearts poſſeſt wit a reverent eſtimation of the great and gracious priviledge of Prayer, that ſuch a great Lord God Almighty, King of Kings, Maker of heaven and earth, ſhould admit ſuch a creeping worm as thee and me ; and leſs than this, ſuch a polluted and undone miſerable creature to approach ſo nigh ſuch a Glorious preſence, think ſtill oh what a favour is this.

Secondly, Never be rash in adventuring into such a Glorious presence in the act of Prayer, deliberate, ponder, recall, and recollect thy self before thou go down to thy knees, whither, and why, and before what a great Majesty thou art now going to plead for thy life, and the life of thy Relations, and above all for the souls of all, that they may not everlastingly miscarry. Who will suffer the Chyrurgion to cut off his arm without great deliberation; shall we be less concerned to approach the *Presence of God*! O Christians, give your selves not only time for the Duty, but also time to prepare for the Duty, Call home your wandring thoughts, set thy heart in order for thy duty before thou fall upon thy duty, by such means you shall not onely pray but prevail.

Thirdly, Pray without ceasing, that is, get into the habit of prayer, be alwayes in a *praying* frame, *pray* at work, *pray* at meat, *pray* when thou walkest by the way, sitting by the fire, *pray* at going to bed, and at up rising in the morning; *pray* alwayes, and in all things prayer is one of Gods great lights in this World, which he expects his Children should keep alwayes burning, unto which great light let me beseech you watch every opportunity to add the oyl of reading this will make it burn much clearer, it is undoubtedly one great preparative to solemn family, and closet prayer, that we first read some blessed portion of holy Scripture, ever remembring that good saying of *Davids* Psalm 119. 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*

Fourthly and lastly, when you rise from your knees, and cease the act of *prayer*, then humbly in faith expect and wait for the *return of prayer*; do not in a formal manner run over a *formal prayer*, remembring what you have prayed for no longer than while in the service,

ſervice; *It is good for a man both to hope and alſo quietly wait for Gods ſalvation*; many it is certainly evident miſs the end of their prayers, becauſe they do not hope and wait with inward thirſt for a return. *David* was much of a contrary frame, *My ſoul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I ſay more than they that watch for the morning.* Let us be at no reſt ſhort of this frame, *Pſal.* 130. 6.

CHAP. VIII.

Shewing the great Decay to Chriſtianity, when mindleſs to reading in the holy Scriptures; with ſix Calamities very obſervable, which Scripture ignorance brings: ſhewing alſo the bleſſed priviledges of thoſe that have the Scripture, with a confutation of that Atheiſtical ſtyle that the people called Quakerss put upon them.

SIGN VIII.

When reading the holy Scriptures is more burthenſome than delightful.

When Iſrael was pleaſed to chooſe them a King, God is pleaſed to ſet him his work, leſt they loſe their end, and God loſe his honour.

And it ſhall come to paſs, when he ſhall ſit upon the Throne of his Kingdom, that he ſhall write him a Copy of Gods Law in a Book, and it ſhall be with him, and he ſhall read therein all the dayes of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren. In like manner when *Joſhua* enters upon the Government, he hath this charge from God, that the Book of the Law ſhould not depart out of his mouth, but he muſt meditate therein day and night; that he might obſerve to do according to all that's written, then ſhould he make his way proſperous, and have good ſucceſs. And when King *David* declares

declares who is the bleſſed man. He is one that delights in the Law of the Lord, making it his meditation day and night. This premiſed, diſcovers moſt precious worth attainable through Scripture reading, and if need were might call for a multitude more witneſſes, both from Scripture and Experience: But it being not ſo much my proper work to aſſert Scripture Excellency; as to ſhew and prove that Chriſtian to be dying to Chriſt, that is not delightfully taken up with reading Gods Word. I ſhall therefore proceed in a plain method.

Thus, where delight to reading grows low, there negligence to reading muſt needs grow high, there decay grows great, and ſuch muſt decline in their ſpiritual eſtate, this negligence bringing with it much ignorance, and ſo covers the eyes and hearts of ſuch as with a veil, ſo as that they cannot ſo ſee as the ſpiritual growing man ſees, Gods Precepts how they command him, Gods Promiſes how they uphold him, Gods threatnings how awfully they perſwade him, the Scripture being his Treaſury or Storehouſe, from whence he is made able through the ſpirits help to withſtand the fiery darts of the wicked one, ſaying after Chriſt Jeſus his Captain, thus and *thus it is written.* It is evident to the meaneſt capacity, that doth but conſider, how great incapacity all ſuch muſt needs be in, to underſtand and reſiſt the manifold temptations and wiles of the evil one, except they be well acquainted with Gods holy Word, that hath in it armour for the whole man, with directions how to put it on; Ignorance therefore here muſt make ſore deſolation, and bring as I humbly conceive upon perſons, theſe ſix Calamities.

Firſt, It makes you in a wilderneſs when ſickneſs and affliction comes, becauſe you will not know how and

and why they come. Sickneſs and Affliction are of two ſorts inward and outward; inward are ſuch as ſeize upon the mind, as a judgment cauſed by the perſons upon whom they come, *Iſa.* 6 9, 10. *And he ſaid, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed but underſtand not; ſee ye indeed, but perceive not, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their eyes, leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and underſtand with their heart, and convert and be healed.* So Rom. 1. 21. 28 *Becauſe that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their fooliſh heart was darkned: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient. For this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* Now ſuch ſore judgments as theſe are come upon and procured by many, who turn the grace of God into wantonneſs, profeſſing to be moſt ſpiritual, live as the almoſt moſt carnal, little minding (becauſe greatly ignorant).of thoſe ſpiritual cauſes they may run into, to the bringing upon themſelves ſuch ſpiritual judgments or ſickneſſes and afflictions as theſe. And indeed how comes it to paſs, that ſuch afflictions are not feared before they come to the provoking ſuch to walk ſo as they may prevent their coming, but ignorance of the Scripture? they not converſing often with them, to the well informing themſelves, what judgments may come on their minds, and what are the Cauſes God aſſigns of their coming, ſo as to be in trembling and dread continually, to the keeping themſelves out of that channel, where ſuch bitter waters run.

Again, there are outward ſickneſſes and afflictions, and they are ſuch as theſe, *Deut.* 28, 58, 59, 60. *If thou wilt not obſerve to do all the words of this Law, that are written in this Book; that thou maiſt fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord thy God; Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy ſeed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, ſore ſickneſſes and of long continuance: Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diſeaſes of Egypt, which thou waſt afraid of, and they ſhall cleave unto thee.* Levit. 26. 15, 16. *If ye ſhall deſpiſe my ſtatutes, and if your ſoul ſhall abhor my judgments, that you will not do them, but that you break my Covenant; I alſo will do this to you, I will even appoint over you Terror, Conſumption, and the burning Ague, that ſhall conſume their eyes, and cauſe ſorrow of heart; and ye ſhall ſow your ſeed in vain, for your Enemies ſhall eat it.* But I ſhall ſpeak fully to the Cauſes of Affliction in the twenty ſecond *Sign*, and therefore proceed no further here, but come to the ſecond Calamity, that Scripture ignorance brings.

Secondly, that your uneven walking with God may bring upon your ſelves death before its time. This Particular is proved thus; Long life promiſed to the obedient, *Exod.* 20. 12. *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy dayes may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Alſo Deut. 32. 46. 47. *Set your hearts to all the words which I teſtifie among you this day, and command them your Children; for it is not in vain, becauſe that through this thing,* (mark that) *ye ſhall prolong your dayes in the land, whither ye go over into Jordan to poſſeſs it.* This is alſo proved by the contrary, which comes upon the diſobedient, *Deut.* 11. 16, 17. *Take heed to your ſelves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aſide and ſerve other Gods, and then the Lords wrath be kindled againſt you, and ye periſh*

riſh quickly from off the good land, which the Lord giveth you; Eccleſ. 8. 13. *But it ſhall not be well with the wicked, neither ſhall he prolong his dayes, which are as a ſhadow, becauſe he feareth not before God.* So Chap. 7. 17. *Be not over much wicked, neither be thou fooliſh, why ſhouldeſt thou die before thy time?*

Thirdly, by means of Scripture Ignorance you cannot know to ask in faith the things you want for ſoul or body; that is, you will not know where to be abſolute or poſitive in your asking, and where to be ſubmiſſive and conditional in your asking: Now the Scripture gives directions as to the putting up petitions to God, and men may eaſily erre by not obſerving them, *Gen.* 32. 26. *And he ſaid* (to wit the Angel) *Let me go for the day breaketh; and he anſwered*, (to wit Jacob) *I will not let thee go, except thou bleſs me.* So Exod. 32. 12. *Wherefore ſhould the Egyptians ſay, for miſchief did he bring them out to ſlay them in the Mountains, and to conſume them from the face of the earth; Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil againſt thy people.* So Acts 12. 5. *Peter therefore was kept in priſon, but prayer was made without ceaſing unto God for him.*

By theſe Scriptures we may obſerve, that to be conditional or indifferent in our asking, when God may be diſhonoured by denying, is not good; therefore in this caſe, may a man coming in Gods way, be bold to ask pardon of his ſins, peace to his conſcience, power over his corruptions without condition: in ſuch caſe, gracious and humble reſolutions to have no denial, greatly liked God, and ſuits with his will, *Iſa* 62. 6, 7. *I have ſet watchmen upon thy walls, O Jeruſalem, which ſhall never hold their peace day nor night; you that make mention of the Lord, keep not ſilence till he eſtabliſh and make Jeruſalem a praiſe in the earth.* But obſerve, in all caſes Petitions putting up, muſt not

thus

thus be framed, *Acts* 21.14. *And when he would not be perſwaded, we ceaſed, ſaying, the will of the Lord be done.* So Rom. 1. 9, 10. *For God is my witneſs, whom I ſerve with my ſpirit in the Goſpel of his Son, that without ceaſing I make mention alwayes of you in my prayers; making requeſt, if by any means I might now at length have a proſperous journey, by the will of God,* (mark that) *to come to you.* So Jam. 4.15. *For that ye ought to ſay, if the Lord will, we ſhall live and do this or that:* I ſhall leave this to conſideration, and proceed to the 4th Calamity.

Fourthly, Negligence to Reading will make you ignorant wherein you may prevent the preſence and comforts of Gods holy ſpirit; that is, that God may either take away his Spirit from ſtriving with you, or you away from his Spirit, *My ſpirit ſhall not alwayes ſtrive,* Gen. 6. 3. 1 Sam. 16. 14. *But the ſpirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil ſpirit from the Lord troubled him.* Pſal. 51. 7. *Take not thy holy ſpirit from me.* Neh. 9 30. *Yet many years didſt thou forbear them, and teſtifiedſt againſt them by thy ſpirit in thy Prophets: yet would they not give ear; Therefore gaveſt thou them into the hands of the people of the Land: But they rebelled and vexed his holy ſpirit; therefore was he turned to be their enemy, and fought againſt them.* By theſe Scriptures we may ſee, that the holy Spirits company may be put away from us through ungracious walking.

Fifthly, Negligence in Scripture will make you ignorant, that there is a Legion of evil Angels waiting hourly to take advantage againſt you; no ſooner in the Text but now mentioned, had the good Spirit left *Saul,* but an evil Spirit comes upon him, 2 *Chron* 18. 19, 20, 21. *And the Lord ſaid who ſhall intice Ahab?* preſently *there came out a Spirit and ſaid, I will intice him, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets.*

Job.

Job. 1. 6. *There was a day when the Sons of God came to preſent themſelves before the Lord, and Satan came alſo among them*; and ſo ſoon as *Joſhua is ſtanding before the Angel of God, Satan is got at his right hand to reſiſt him.* Now ignorance that there is a Legion, or very many evil Spirits waiting all advantages and opportunities to do us hurt, occaſions many to be ſecure where and when they have no cauſe, and ſo their feet come to be inſnared in by-paths to their ſhame, and ſorrow; let us therefore be ſo ſtudious in Scripture, as to ſay in truth with the holy Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 2. 10, 11. *To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive alſo, leſt Satan ſhould get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.* : Clearly noting, how careful this good man was to keep the tempter at greateſt diſtance, while perſons are not ſenſible that they are continually attended with wicked Spirits, that ſeek to enſnare them, by drawing them aſide from God, they ſhall be the oftner captivated, and ſo in their ſpiritual eſtate in great danger to be ſpoiled; *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through drie places, ſeeking reſt, and findeth none; then he returns to his houſe,* [or heart] *from whence he came out, and finding it empty, ſwept*, that is, deſtitute of the good Spirits company, *then goeth he and takes with him ſeven more wicked Spirits than himſelf, and enters in, and dwells there, Mat.* 12. 43, 44. Hence it is clear that evil Spirits both wait advantages, and take them where they find ſuitable ſubjects to be gaining upon. But I paſs this, and come to the laſt Calamity which negligence brings.

Sixthly, It makes you ignorant that you may hinder Gods holy Spirit from working any effectual good upon you. This may poſſibly ſeem ſtrange to ſome, that the good purpoſes of Gods good Spirit upon any

may

may be by them hindered; but if it be considered well, it need not be strange, for if the workings of the holy Spirit were unresistable, then few if any could be ungodly; it strove much with the old World, and yet they were not worthy to be saved from the Deluge; and striving need not be where there can be no resisting. Again the holy Spirit was much grieved with *Israels* stubbornnes, testifying against them many years, *Neh.* 9 yet would they not give year; how could it be said the Spirit grieved at their withstanding, if they could not withstand? *Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and make known my words unto you; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them, but they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore* (mark that) *he was turned to be their enemy.* Now if the workings and strivings of the holy Spirit, were unresistable, certainly *Israel* with whom it so strove, being so bemoaned of God for their rebellion, neither could nor would have so withstood him. *How shall I give thee up O Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee O Israel? how shall I make thee as Adma or Zeboim? my heart is hot within me, my repentings are kindled together*: Would it not be blasphemy to say, that Gods thus bemoaning was not real? it is altogether certain, that the very heart of God is set out in these expressions.

But before I conclude this Sign, I shall, God assisting, take liberty to speak a little to the *blessed priviledge* of such as have the *Holy Scripture*, and how good it is they knew the worth of this Priviledge; for a Jewel is not valued by the ignorant at its worth, though there be great and real worth in the Scriptures, yet to the depraved understanding they are veiled:

ed : And what Nation is ſo great (ſaith good *Moſes*) that hath Statutes and Judgments ſo righteous as all this Law which I ſet before you this day. The holy Scriptures, ſaith a good man, are the Inditement of the Holy Ghoſt, full of infinite wiſdom and eloquence, containing in them the very heart of God; They are the Saints Counſellors and Comforters in the Houſe of their Pilgrimage : Therefore it is not only our duty to *read* them, but our great Priviledge and unſpeakable *happineſs* that we have them to *read*. Better ſaith one want the *Light* of the *Sun* than the *light* of the *holy Scriptures*. Who ever told the world that our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt died for ſinners*, yea the worſt of ungodly ones but the *Scriptures*, It is not that ſome fondly fancy of a light within, that ever did or could lead, to the certain belief, that there was one Jeſus of *Nazareth*, a man approved of God, mighty in word and deed, taken by wicked hands and ſlain, or made an offering for ſin. *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.* As one worthily hath ſaid you have in the Scripture matter for every condition; there is healing for the wounded, wiſdom for the fooliſh, ſtrength for the weak, ſight for the blind, feet for the lame, yea help in all conditions for the helpleſs : In a word, there is Phyſick to be had for the diſeaſed ſoul, and a Cordial for the fainting ſoul, *Had not thy Law been my Counſellor, I had then periſhed in my affliction, how ſweet are thy words to my taſte, yea ſweeter than honey to my mouth, more to be deſired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold. Moreover by them is thy ſervant warned, and in keeping thereof is great reward, Pſa.* 19. 10. 119. 72. 103. Now this will moſt evidently appear to be a bleſſed priviledge, if we do but conſider the conſequence of *Scripture Ignorance*; *My people are deſtroyed for want of* knowledge; *ye erre* (ſaith our

our Lord Jesus) *not knowing the Scriptures. Understandest thou what thou readest. Search the Scriptures for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they that testifie of me.* And he opened their understandings, that they might understand the *Scriptures.* We have a blessed Story in the 11. of *Acts* 24 28. of a certain Jew named *Apollos*, born at *Alexandria*, an eloquent man and mighty in the *Scriptures*, for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly shewing by the *Scriptures*, that Jesus was the Christ; so that the holy Apostle St. *Paul* saith, for whatsoever things were written aforetimes were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the *Scriptures* might have *hope.* The like Testimony we have in *Timothy*, the second Epistle, and the third Chapter, and the 16. and the 17 verses: All *Scripture is* given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Wherefore is the Scripture thus given, (mark it warily) to this great end, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. This esteem had good *Job*, and good *David* of the Scriptures, they were more to them than their necessary food yea, than *thousands of gold and silver*; therefore *blessed* is he that readeth and understandeth the sayings of this *blessed* book. How may this sharply rebuke that Atheistical Spirit risen in our dayes, that puts such an undervaluing style upon the *holy Scriptures*, calling upon persons to go to the light within for life, and telling them he is not here (meaning in the Scriptures) but is risen, that's *a dead letter*, thus undermining or pouring contempt upon the highest *Blessing* and Priviledge that ever the world had on this side the Lord of Life. But at the same time put a high value upon their own Atheistical Pamphlets:

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Do but read the Titles they give the one and the Title they give the other; what is the Holy Scripture, a A DEAD LETTER, that is its name; A three and sixpenny piece: What are their Pamphlets names, LOVE TO THE LOST, or a hand held forth to the helpless. *The Ancient of dayes is come. The measuring Reed of the Lord: The Morning watch: Seven Thunders uttering their voices: A Message sent forth from the risen seed of God: The new Creation brought forth: Beams of eternal brightness: The Trumpet of the Lord sounding forth: The Brasen Serpent lifted up: A Salutation from the breathings of life*: A tender Visitation of the Fathers love to all the elect Children: A true light shining in *England*: The everlasting Rule born witness unto: The Banner of love: The scattered Sheep sought after: Joyful tydings to the begotten of God in all; The everlasting Gospel of Repentance and remission of sins held forth; A dore opened to the imprisoned seed in the World; A general Epistle to the Assembly of the First born; The true and everlasting Rule, &c.

CHAP. IX.

Shewing that an itching ear in Christians after Novelties, bespeaks them decaying to godliness; with four Remedies against it.

SIGN IX.

When you are mighty inquisitive after Novelties, or new things, rather than wholsome Doctrine.

This Sign is too too common amongst Professors, and commonly ariseth from some dislike that they take, because things go not just as they will have them, after the light of their own eyes, such may know

know themſelves, or at leaſt be known by their inſtability or running from one thing to another; as *Solomon* ſaith, given to change, no longer contented than while they are proſecuting ſome notion or other, that hath in it the face of new, and if with their notion they prove to be accepted, then perhaps quieted for a while, till ſome other new conceit take them; but if not accepted; then they ſwell ſo big, that the bounds of the Church are too ſtrait to hold them. And ſure from hence hath riſen the multitude of dividings in opinion, that now are on foot in our Land, men growing confidently conceited that they are in the right, and no reaſon ſhall ſway them; but if their offer be rejected, then preſently they make a ſchiſm, and ſo ſtriving to get a party, crying out of great injuſtice, as though truth were onely in them, and withſtood becauſe their Notion is withſtood. All this while the great end of Church being, and Ordinances appointing (to wit edification) not ſo much as thought of, but forgetting that bleſſed rule of Chriſt Jeſus beſt followers (who became all things to all men that they might gain the more) drive on furiouſly, and come what will come in the iſſue, all muſt preſently be as they ſee, or elſe they will be gone; whereas God knows if they were narrowly looked into, they would be found of the ſimple that are apt to believe every word, while the prudent looks well to his goings, not haſty to receive, nor haſty to forgo what he hath already received.

By this I would not be underſtood to palliate men, who count others giddy-headed for leaving an old Romiſh form, when by God they are otherwiſe perſwaded, light breaking in, and truth being made manifeſt; but rather indeed would by this give ſuch to underſtand, that the drift of what is here pointed at, hath

hath respect to such as in a right constituted Church cannot be contented; not in the least encouraging any others to be contented with false settlement, ignorantly concluding, that if they change, it will be to something new and not true. Men may change, but it must be for the better, yet how apt are persons to be affected with changes, that they will change though it be for the worst: At such sort of people my drift is, it being an evil that the Scripture is not wanting to tell us of, *Exod.* 32. in the beginning, *While Moses is but absent for a while from Israel, they cry to Aaron to make them new Gods, saying, that these be thy Gods O Israel*; in like manner, as you may read in *Numb.* 11. 6. compared with 21. 5. Gods own appointment that once was welcome to them, now they loath it, while it remains the same from Gods own continued institution, yet they were a weary of it, calling it light bread: An unsettled people taken with new things because new, and a weary of this though true bread. The Author to the *Hebrews*, chap. 13. 8, 9 seems to rebuke such a spirit as this, *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*; *Be not carried away with divers and strange Doctrines*: clearly noting, that they were ready to hearken after something or other that would have tended to their subverting; *That we henceforth be no more Children tossed too and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*, (note that) *by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*; *but growing up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ.* All which premised bespeaks Professors care to be how they may stand *unmoveable*; abiding, *and abounding in the way of the Lord*, and not to be soon moved in their minds from their standing, because of some new spirit that seems to proffer it self.

As a help therefore againſt this decay, I would humbly offer three or four directions, and ſo conclude this Sign.

That you would *pray* often for Gods leading before you take upon his Profeſſion; Religion is a holy tye or Land-mark, a ſetting bounds to a mans wayes, ſquaring them by, and ordering them according to the written Word of God: Take away the Scriptures, and you take away Religions viſible Rule: When the queſtion was propounded by what means may a young man cleanſe his way, it was anſwered in the ſame ſpirit, By taking heed thereto according to thy Word. As many as walk according to this Rule peace be on them: It is a bleſſed Antidote againſt that ſpirit of diſtraction that attends many in being ſo curious and inquiſitive after Novelties (that they run hither and thither like *Noahs* Dove, reſting no where) to pray often that God would ſettle and ſtabliſh them in his truth; when God leads the Soul after himſelf, he openeth the *underſtanding*, and *greatens* the deſire after the good things to come, and this leſſens the deſire after thoſe *fading good* things preſent, that our hearts may be ſtabliſhed with *grace*, and not with meat, that is, with the valuable worth of what is durable, and not to be taken up with what at its beſt ſtate is altogether *vanity*. O Chriſtians! be often therefore upon your *knees* with *God*, that he would order your ſteps according to his word; make good *David* your Pattern for this, *Pſal.* 119 34. *Give me underſtanding, and I ſhall keep thy Law, yea, I ſhall obſerve it with my whole heart.*

2. As well hear and duly conſider what can be ſaid againſt what you are about to receive, as what can be ſaid for it. This will but tend to your ſtrengthening in what is truth: Our Age is an inquiſitive Age; many

many run to and fro; that knowledge is encreaſt and in the mouth of Babes: God doth ordain praiſe; therefore the World is now nearer to its end, and Sathans malice growing more as his time groweth ſhorter; ſo that now he doth transform himſelf into an Angel of light, and hath his Agents at work, to cauſe, if poſſible, many perſons to ſtumble and fall by being too ſodainly taken with what comes in their way, that is, neither duely weighing for nor againſt; like our Proverb, *Early ripe, and early rotten,* that is, taken with a new thing, becauſe new, without pondering how far true; if a man fall in truths way, and cloſe there, it doth not commend the nobleneſs of his wiſdom, though truth be taken, if he fell in with it upon too *ignoble tearms.* What makes ſo many in our dayes fulfil the Apoſtles words, *Gal.* 1, 6. *I marvel that you are ſo ſoon removed from him that called you into the grace of Chriſt to another Goſpel.* What is the matter? Did you not fully conſider what a valuable truth you at firſt made your choice? When any one heareth the word of the Kingdom, *and underſtandeth it not*, that is in the extent, or to its worth, ſeeth not that Jewel in it that would make any ſinner *ſell all* for its *price*; ſuch are quickly offended, and ſo ſoon turned aſide; and yet at the firſt heard the word, and with joy received it; but rain deſcended, floods came, and the winds of perſecution blew upon them, ſo that by and by, or in a ſhort ſpace they are offended, and turn aſide: Now the Spirits counſel is expreſs that we *prove all things*, and then *hold faſt* that which is good. He that goes to build, and conſiders not the coſt, whether he have ſufficient to finiſh, may meet with that Goſpel Proverb: This man began to build, but was not able to finiſh; this makes ſo many too early eſpouſed in a marriage tye turn extravagant; they conſider not the

charge of a Family, the loſs of children, the coſt of ſickneſſe, the thouſands of neceſſities that a domeſtick ſtate would call for beyond a ſingle life: Thus the burden grows too heavy, being not from forewarn'd fore-arm'd, whilſt he that tried all things conſidered the coſt, counted up beforehand what hath hapned, had made it his free choice, takes up his croſs, like the good Mother quickly reconciled with a morning ſmile from her dear Babe, as a ſufficient compenſation for the laſt nights toyl.

3. Be careful that you be able to warrant every principle of your practice, at leaſt by two or more Texts of Scripture. Let (ſaith the holy Apoſtle *Paul*) the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admoniſhing one another. Experience may be clouded, Conſcience may be ſeared, Heart may be hardened, underſtanding blinded; but ſtill the Law is light, the Word of God abideth for ever. Our bleſſed Lord that wanted not other arguments to damp the Tempter, beſides the Scriptures, yet becauſe that is a ſure and infallible teſtimony, he flyes thither for weapons to encounter Satan withall, ſtill replying, *It is written, it is written, it is written*, *Matt.* 4. 4. 7. 10. the ſame reply to three great and ſeveral temptations plainly teaching this to Chriſtians, as the ſureſt rule in the hour of temptation to fly unto. For this cauſe the holy Scriptures are rightly ſtil'd the *Spirits Sword*, *Eph.* 6. 17. and *take the ſword of the ſpirit, which is the word of God*. When the Diſciples hearts were heavy, and filled with ſorrow about Chriſts Paſſion, how doth he ſeek to comfort and ſtrengthen them, (but with this Cordial) *thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer and to riſe again the third day*. In like manner, when our Lord was betrayed, and could have called to his help more than twelve Legions of Angels (that

(that is 6000 foot and 600 horſe after the *Roman* Account) a ſtrength much more than they that took him, to have reſcued him, preſently takes ſanctuary here, *Mat.* 26. 54. *But how then muſt the Scriptures be fulfilled*, that thus it muſt be. O bleſſed Pattern to write by in all things thus to ſay; thus ſaith the word of the Lord, this Scripture tells me, that I am a great ſinner, one of the worſt of ſinners, and that except I repent I ſhall periſh for ever. It is the word of God that calls me to believe on the Son of God, in whom is the life of the World, and he that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved: It is the Word of God tells me, *ſtrait* is the *gate*, and *narrow* is the *way* that leadeth unto life, and he that doth not take up his *Croſs* and follow Chriſt, cannot be his Diſciple; it is this Word commands me not onely to love God and my Brother, but to love my enemies that do me hurt, and though this go greatly againſt the grain of my ſpirit, to do good to them that doe evil to me, to give him bread in his ſtrait, that denied me bread in my ſtrait; but this muſt I do that the *Scriptures might be fulfilled: Bleſs them that curſe you, pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you.* Oh! this is a hard Leſſon were it not thus written; it is Gods Word, and it is God that makes it an eaſie Word to me: my proud heart never would nor could ſtoop to this, did not his bleſſed Word command me ſo. Thus Chriſtians in all your ſervices let the Word of God go before you, let it be your Pillar of Cloud by day, and your Pillar of Fire by night, *Numb.* 9. 22. when the Cloud reſted Iſrael reſted, whether it were two dayes, a moneth, or a year, that the Cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle, the Children of Iſrael abode in their Tents and journied not, but when it was taken up they journied. This will make you like the good Builder that *digged*

deep, and laid his *Foundation* upon a *Rock*, ſo the rain, wind, and the flouds came, and beat upon this Houſe, but it fell not, becauſe it was founded upon the *Word of God*

Fourthly and laſtly, Would you be delivered from this dying ſign of being mighty inquiſitive after new things rather than wholſome doctrine, then labour as far as you are knowers to *be doers*. Negligence here provoketh God to ſuffer a Spirit of error and *deep ſleep* to fall upon many: To know is a bleſſing, if accompanied with the end wherefore *knowledge* was given; namely *to doe*, but is a *woe* when *alone*; *If you know theſe things happy are ye if ye do them*. Now I *know* that thou loveſt me, before this tryal thou calledſt me Lord God Almighty, and gaveſt me good words, and ſaidſt I ſhould be thy God, and thou wouldeſt love me, and fear me, but now I know that thou feareſt me, thou haſt given a large proof of it in this, that thou haſt not withheld thy Son, thy only Son *Iſaac*, whom thou loveſt, from me, but didſt at my word take the Lad, the Son of the Promiſe and of thy great affection, and laidſt him upon the Altar, and didſt ſtretch forth thine hand, and tookeſt the knife to ſlay him for an offering to the Lord. This is not onely the ſafeſt way to increaſe in knowledge, but it is a ſure way to have knowledge ſanctified, then doth God bleſs our little talent of knowledge with increaſe, and with comfort, when we put that little into practiſe. If you know that the ſtate of ſuch and ſuch of Gods Children are *thirſty*, *naked*, *ſick*, *and in priſon*, and be as *unconcerned* for them as was Iſrael of old for their Brethren in Captivity, it will bring upon you the like woe. Woe ſaith the Spirit to them that are at eaſe in *Sion*, *Amos* 6 6. that drink wine in Bowls, and anoint themſelves with chief ointment, but are not

grieved

grieved for the afflictions of *Joſeph*: Such ſhall goe captive with the firſt that goe captive, they ſhall be, when God begins to reckon as ſingular in the puniſhment, as they were in the ſin. Oh that this may be of uſe to all, thus far, that they would cry after knowledg, and lift up their voice for underſtanding; but withal to remember the bleſſing is not here: This work is imperfect, and will not profit till its fellow be added to it, *Jam.* 1.25. *But who ſo looketh into the perfect Law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work,* (mark that) *this man ſhall be bleſt in his deed.* Conſider what you read, and the bleſſing of God goe along with it, Amen.

CHAP. X.

Proving us dying to Chriſt, when others ſinnings are not our ſorrowings; with two Remedies againſt this Decay.

SIGN X.

When you can hear of foul miſcarriages in others, with little or no heart remorſe.

That is, When the knowledg of others ſinning proves not thy ſorrowing; where the name and honour of God lies near a heart, a deep wound muſt needs come at the tydings of miſcarriage, and by this moſt certainly may a growing or declining Chriſtian be read, and read himſelf if heeded; for anſwerable to the ſpiritual ſenſe or feeling of things, will their behaviour be. A man that is wounded in his body, is more or leſs aſtoniſhed at it, and amazed by it, as he more or leſs retains his ſenſes; want whereof leſſens not the wound, it rather ſhews the danger of ſuch to be the greater: Three or four things conſidered muſt needs declare, and prove ſuch Chriſtians not only dy-

ing but near dead, as can hear of others ſinning, and by no means they themſelves toucht with ſorrowing.

Firſt, the great diſhonour that ſin brings to God; the ſin of no people diſhonours God ſo much as the ſin of Profeſſors. *You have I known of all the Families of the earth, therefore I wil. puniſh you for all your iniquities,* Amos 3. 2.

Secondly, the great reproach it brings upon the Goſpel; A man that never profeſt any thing better than making it his Trade to ſin, though his eſtate be miſerable, yet he profeſſes not better; but for ſuch as take upon them the name or profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, and not depart from, or again turn to iniquity, provokes the enemies of God to blaſpheme, 1 *Sam.* 1. 12.

Thirdly, The lamentable miſery that ſuch bring upon themſelves; There is more hope of one that never made any profeſſion; the ſin of this is next door to impoſſibility of redemption from final hardening, *It had been better they had never known the way of truth, than after depart from the holy commandment,* 2. Pet. 21. 4. The evil world by ſeeing ſuch ſin, are not onely tempted to remain in their ſinful ſtate, but to glory in it; for they may think they do but ſin, and ſerve, and pleaſe themſelves; and if Profeſſors ſo do, why may not they? Thus the Devil ſecretly laughs at them, and openly gets advantage by them; *Wherefore the ſin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord. Elies* Sons that were in the Prieſt-hood are ſingled out with marks of Gods diſpleaſure, as ſinners of a deep dye, inſomuch that want of ſuitable indignation againſt them for their evil in their Father *Eli,* who in other things was a good man, brings upon him that, that makes the ears of all *Iſrael* that heard of it to tingle,

1 *Sam.*

1 *Sam.* 2 3, 4. What a plague was brought upon thoſe that did evil before the Lord in *Moſes* time? twenty four thouſand ſlain till *Phineas* in his zeal to the Lord ſtood up and made an attonement, *Numb.* 25. It is without all queſtion, that the Nations round about, were as to the act more wicked and abominable, as to the ſame and ſuch like wickedneſs; yet we do not read of ſuch ſeverity in God toward them, as to thoſe his own people that had ſeen his miracles, and his wonders; were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemie, leſt their adverſaries ſhould behave themſelves ſtrangely, and ſay our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done this, I would ſcatter my people among the Nations, but for tempting the wicked to do more wickedly: Gods ſeverity ſhould be ſet out againſt his own people in bitter characters; this muſt needs render ſuch very much dying to Chriſt, that can hear of foul miſcarriages in other Profeſſors, and not themſelves taken with horrour and aſtoniſhment, *My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my heart, becauſe thou haſt heard, Oh my ſoul in Jeruſalem, the ſound of the Trumpet, the Alarm of War; ſet a mark upon the fore-heads of the men that ſigh and weep for the abominations that are done in the middeſt thereof*, Ezekiel 9. 4. *I will gather them that are ſorrowful for the ſolemn aſſemblies, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it is a burthen*, Zeph. 3. 18. Doth not the Scripture with one conſent deſcribe the growing and declining Chriſtian by this very mark? the one is ſorrowful, the other mourns not; it is reported there is fornication amongſt you, 1 *Cor.* 5. and you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned: clearly noting, that this was none of their vertues, but indeed an evident token of ſpiritual loſs in them, the contrary being ſo honourable in Gods account, *viz.* a ſorrowful ſpirit at others miſdoings;

miſdoings plainly proving, that if a wanting a certain character of great decay: I ſhall come now to offer briefly ſome Cauſes of this ſpiritual decay, and ſome Remedies to remove or prevent it, and ſo conclude this Sign.

Firſt, want of zeal, that burning ſhining Grace, which when accompanied with judgment, cannot bear to ſee or hear of Miſcariages in others, without perſonal horror; *As ſoon as Moſes came nigh the Camp, and ſaw the Calf, and dancing that was there, his anger waxed hot, and he took the Calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, ground it to powder*, Exod. 32. So *Phineas* in his zeal to the Lord, when he ſaw the evils that were committed in the Camp, aroſe and ſlew both the man and the woman, and ſo the plague was ſtaid.

But ſecondly, want of becoming love to others eternal welfare, is a cauſe of our not ſorrowing at their ſinnings; that good man *Jeremiah*, chap. 13. 17. *If they will not hear*, (but perſiſt in their evil way) *his ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for their pride.* See this alſo in Jeſus Chriſt, that had ſuch love to periſhing *Jeruſalem*, *That when he was come near and beheld the City, he wept over it*, Luke 19. 41.

As Remedies againſt this decay; Firſt, conſider what a wide breach it makes in our ſpiritual ſtate, and whither in a little time, it will bring us; *Repent, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight againſt them with the ſword of my mouth*, Revel. 2. 19.

Secondly, In order to removing this, do as men do that have a deſperate mortal diſeaſe growing upon them, if not ſpeedily remedied; how will they go and run, pray and pay, leave no ſtone unturned, no means unattempted?

Even in like ſort muſt ſpiritual diſeaſes be looked at

at and laboured with. Good *Nehemiah* when he did but hear of the Afflictions that his brethren for their sin were brought into, it wounds his heart, *chap.* 1. 4. *And it came to pass when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned and fasted certain dayes, and prayed before the God of heaven.* Canst thou, my Christian Brother, hear of foul miscarriages in others, with little or no heart remorse? Art thou as it were unconcerned; Doth not others sinning prove thy wounding; far from thy heart is this consideration; How greatly is God dishonoured, and the soul of this poor creature endangered and the Enemies of God encouraged to continue in their impenitent estate.

Who that believeth in good earnest that there is a state where the *worm shall never die, and fire never go out*, that can behold any going towards this estate post haste, as it were, and not be like minded to Christ Jesus, who when he was come near poor *Jerusalem, he beheld the City and wept over it*, because they knew not the sad Calamity that was coming upon them. Doth it not invite pitty to behold our friend crying out with bitter cries in a Feaver fit, or fit of the Stone or Collick, yea to behold him upon a Rack, broken with a Wheel, sawn asunder, drawn limb from limb with wild Horses, starved to death with pining hunger, like the Calamity of *Jerusalem*, where *the hands of the pitiful women* took and boyled in a pot their tender Children, *they were their meat in the day of Famine.* Oh! how ghastly is this to think on, much more to behold, who can refrain from bitter weeping to hear and behold such doleful cries: but what is this to *Hell*, there is death in death, pain perpetually; it is not *Hell* onely because the greatest of misery, and pain, and torment dwells there, but because it is for *ever* and *ever*. Therefore

fore in beholding or hearing of others miſcariages, we are to look upon them through that clear glaſs of a Goſpel-like ſpirit, that ſets every action in its own ſtation, and then it will tell us, to miſcarry in a matter of eternity is for nature *intolerable*, for duration *eternal*, and ſo the loſs *irreparable*: *My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart, my heart maketh a noiſe in me, I cannot hold my peace, becauſe thou haſt heard, O my ſoul, the ſound of the Trumpet, the Alarm of War, Jer.* 4 19. But I ſhall leave this alſo to conſideration, and paſs to the eleaventh Sign of decay in godlineſs.

CHAP. XI.

Shewing that unſavoury talking among Chriſtians when they meet, proves them earthly minded, with three Cauſes of this Decay; And twelve queſtions to be asked when they meet together.

SIGN XI.

When in your comings together, your uſual talk is not ſavoury and heavenly.

Upon various occaſions Chriſtians meet together; ſometimes with thoſe that are wringing their hands for ſorrow; ſometimes with thoſe that are clapping (as it were) their hands for joy; ſometimes at the Aſſembly, ſometimes at one anothers dwellings: Now all comings together Miniſter occaſion of talking, and will greatly evidence where moſt is each others Treaſure, it being natural for perſons when they meet, by their voice to expreſs what is the workings of their mind; And as the heart is more or leſs heaven-ward, ſo certainly will their talk bend more or leſs that way: Earthly-minded men when they meet, will be carrying on *their trade*, counting it matter of duty to promote

mote what lieth neareſt *their hearts*; ſo thoſe that decay to ſpirituals, having begun to affect themſelves with new Lovers, and ſo loſing the ſenſe they once had to the beſt things, may be diſcerned now to have changed for the worſt, by their unſavoury and earthly talking; and how advantagious all meetings are to the promoting (whatſoever is deſigned) none is able to expreſs, but ſuch as experimentally make a view of it, well conſidering, *That evil communications corrupt good manners*; or leſſens a mans hold to the beſt things, and when that precious time in Chriſtians meeting together is ſo ſpent, that its rather ſpilt like water upon the ground, ſuch leaving no ſavour of grace behind them, muſt needs argue, that they are falling, if not fallen from their firſt love, beſides the diſhonour done to God: great hath been the wrong ſuch have done both themſelves and their adherents, in publick or private aſſembling.

What more unpreparing the heart, and indiſpoſing the affection to the ſpiritual worſhipping of God, than either beforehand being in a carnal ſleepy poſture, or elſe in ſuch unſeaſonable, if not worſe? talking (ſome of their Farms, others of their Merchandiſe,) nay perhaps *backbiting* and *whiſperingly* opening the infirmities of others, to the ſowing prejudice in the hearts of thoſe, that through ignorance and weakneſs incline to hear them; whereas on the contrary, ſuch whoſe minds are alwayes carrying about with them the contemplating of Gods end, in giving opportunity after opportunity, put themſelves with trembling care into ſuch imployment *(of ſtill getting or doing good)* as may obtain from their gracious God, the approbation of redeeming time: See that good *Nehemiahs* practiſe for this, he no ſooner meets *Hanani*, (but what?) *I asked concerning the Jews that had eſcaped,*

eſcaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jeruſalem; he is inquiring preſently, how it fared with the people of God, and Jeruſalem the City of *David*, and place of his Fathers Sepulcher, and ful near his heart their welfare lay, as appears by his hearty affection and affliction at the evil tydings, *Chap.* 1. 4. *And it came to paſs, when I heard theſe words, that I ſate down and wept, and mourned certain dayes, and faſted and prayed before the Lord God of heaven.* I ſhall add another Text, and then proceed to the cauſes of this Decay, *Mal.* 3.16. *Then they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another* (but their talking was ſo ſavoury and ſo heavenly) that *the Lord hearkned and heard it*, (yea) and *a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his Name.*

In time of War, when the ſword cuts off by thouſands in a day, is there not great wringing of hands for ſorrow, when the report is come to our knowledge, that the mighty are fallen in the gate, ſuch a Father, ſuch a Husband, ſuch a Son, ſuch a Brother? is not this our talk wherever we come? may not our trouble be read in every countenance, as good *Nehemiahs* was, when his heart was filled with ſorrow, his countenance was ſo ſad that it could not be hid from the King: Had we not a doleful inſtance of this in the time of *London's* late Fire and Plague? were not thoſe doleful times the ſubject of all our talk, both to God and man? in all our aſſemblings together, what a ſtroke did it carry upon our hearts? How was our Pen employed to ſend about this dreadful tydings, that ſo famous a City ſhould *in three dayes* be brought down to the duſt, and more than *ſeaventy thouſand* of its Inhabitants carried as captives to their *long home*? Oh! the bitter cries in the Evening, with which ſalute we

ſtill

ſtill ſhut up our doors, *Bring out your dead, Bring out your dead,* whoſe hearts were not affected then, whoſe looks were not dejected, whoſe tongues were not imployed when we met together, to be talking as in *Joels* time, they were commanded to tell their Children, and their Children commanded to tell their Children to another generation: That which the Palmer worm left hath the Locuſt eaten, that which the Locuſt left that hath the Canker-worm eaten, that which the Canker-worm hath left hath the Caterpillar eaten; that which our *Sword* left did the *Fire* waſte, and that which the Fire left did the *Plague* ſweep away, both perſons and ſubſtance alſo. Now theſe dreadful ſtroaks being ſtroaks void of pitty, ſparing none, the old man or he that ſtooped with age, nor yet the man of full ſtrength, nor yet the babe of dayes; it left the *Mother* without *Child*, it left the little one without a *Mother*: From hence this became our talk whetherſoever we went, it was our burden and ſong at Feaſting or Faſting, the beginning and cloſe of every Meeting.

Oh! whats the matter Chriſtians when you meet, that your talk is ſo unſavoury, or leſs ſavoury than this was in its day; is not your day much more a needful day, to have all its meetings in all the ſpaces thereof filled with ſavoury and heavenly talking, where ever you go, *a Sword, a Plague, a Fire, a Famine* attends you, yea theſe in their perfection in their higheſt dimenſion. No loſs like your loſs, if you miſs the bleſſed end of aſſembling, and it be not accompanied with ſavoury talking, of that City you are or ſhould be always looking for. I ſhall cloſe this Sign with the Holy Ghoſts own words to the *Epheſian* Church, *Chap.* 4. 29. (when ye meet together) let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the uſe of edifying, that it may Miniſter grace

grace to the hearers. Ask not your friend or brother of his welfare in the common unſenſible cuſtome that men generally do, but in asking, ask with ſuch a deportment, gracefulneſs, and gravity, that may preach the weight of heaven upon thy heart, and let your words be to this purpoſe; Ask him theſe twelve queſtions, as God ſhall help briefly, but ask them all in love. 1. Brother, are you *alive for God*? is your heart as warm now, you have been ſome years a Profeſſor, as it was in the day *of your eſpouſals*? 2. What is become of your Maſter ſin? have you got the victory over it, doth it at all times, and in all conditions *ſpeak faintly*? do you in truth *moſt loath* that which once you did *moſt love*? 3. Hath the remembrance of *Heaven* and *Hell* a reverential preſence ſtill upon your heart? have you not loſt (are you ſure) that feeling of theſe two ſtates you once had; for it is a very *hard work* to keep *alive* this frame, and very *eaſie* to let it *goe*? 4. *Is Cloſet prayer* delightful to you ſtill? are you raviſht in ſecret Communion with God there? doth your *heart burn* within you whilſt you are talking with him? 5. Doth the Croſs of Chriſt diſmay you yea or nay? how are you in a time of *Proſperity*? doth it much *lift you up*? how are you in a time of *Adverſity*? doth it caſt you *down* much? doth not *Chriſts yoke* ſeem too heavy for you, can you chearfully ſay ſtill, Lord, thy will be done; it is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good? 6. What ſenſe have you of your *undone eſtate* out of *Chriſt*? do you ſtill feelingly remember what a *vile filthy polluted ſtate* you were in, when he firſt ſet his *love* upon you? hath your ſoul, your unconverted eſtate ſtill in remembrance to *ſelf-loathing*, and is your ſoul ſtill *humbled* within you therefore. 7. Do you ſtill believe you had been in *Hell* long ago, had you had a reward according to your work,

work, and doth this thought live in you, ſo as to make you *thankful* for every thing, ſtill in the *worſt* condition, becauſe you ſay, it is *mercy* it is not *worſe*, it is of the Lords mercy we are not in *hell?* 8. Doth the ſenſe of future good greaten in your eſteem? have you as high a value of *heavenly things* as you had at your firſt Converſion? and doth eſtimation of *earthly things* grow daily leſs and leſs? 9. Is your *Conſcience tender* ſtill, and doth every little glance to declenſion create *ſighing* there, cannot conſcience charge you (are you ſure) with the living in the *omiſſion* of any known *duty*, or *commiſſion* of any *known ſin?* let me in love beſeech you ſearch narrowly here. 10. Is your *love* to our *Lord Jeſus*, his Ordinances, and People, as much or more as it was in your eſpouſal dayes, or is it *leſs?* be ſure you be faithful to your own ſoul in this. 11. Is the great *Lord God Almighty* ſet before you all the day long? are your apprehenſions of his omniſcient *eye*, ſuch as that you can in truth ſay with good *Job*, where ever you go, *Doth he not ſee my wayes, and count my goings?* 12. Are you *every day* more or leſs thinking of your *laſt day*, and that you are going ſhortly into the *ſhades of eternity*, and when you put off your *Cloathes* at *night*, is it ſtill your *meditation*, that the time is at hand when you can *never* more put them on.

Now the cauſes of this decay, which being avoided, may alſo ſerve as Remedies againſt it; and they are three.

Firſt, Long cuſtome to Chriſtian meetings.

Secondly, Unskilfulneſs in Goſpel Self-denial.

Thirdly, Negligence to a plain duty.

Firſt, Long cuſtome to Chriſtian Meetings; though this be not in it ſelf a cauſe, yet it may be eaſily ſo converted; for without a godly jealouſie over the heart in

often meeting with Christians, the very customе of it will by little and little, steal away that spiritual vigour, that ought to run in the veins of every one, where ever they are, to the making their meeting as much as is possible, to Gods honour and their souls edifying; for customе begets such an aptnes to any service, that except the heart be still examined, persons will be in meetings together, very destitute both of suitable preparation, and answerable expectation, and all through long custom; for as in sinning, it will take away in time the conscience of sin; so in the best performances it will rob a man of that forehand care that should attend him, unless he be much upon his watch.

Secondly, A second Cause is, Unskilfulnes in one great point of Christianity; *viz.* Gospel self-denial, which stands in a conforming the whole man to be alwayes pleasing and serving the Lord; such knowing themselves not to be their own, but bought with a price, and therefore whether eating, drinking, talking, walking, to be doing all to the glory of God, whose they are: Now unskilfulnes herein, will be still carrying on all affairs with much mixture; partly in designing the Lord, partly designing self; having not so learned to live upon anothers bottom, as the Gospel grace of self-denial teacheth, *Mat.* 16. 24, 25. *Mark.* 6. 34, 35. by which means many are at a great stand how to spend this and that opportunity, and so instead of asking their fellow Christian how he grows or stands affected to the best things, what *temptations* are upon him? *at what times he finds himself most weak and unable to resist? and whether often in closet prayer, watchings, fastings? and what assurance he hath from some solid marks, whether he grows yea or nay? and what value he puts on fellowship with God, and enjoying the light of his countenance? what all this is, and what its worth,*

when

when it shines, when it's clouded? but if instead of such Communings as these, time be vainly spent in hearing and telling some new thing, complaining rather of hard times, than hard hearts, this and the other outward loss, instead of true losing; if the case be thus it must needs proclaim you dying Christians; for that in your comings together, your talk is not savoury and heavenly.

Thirdly, A third Cause may be this, Negligence to a plain duty, *Heb.* 10. 24, 25. *And let us consider one another, to provoke to love, and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is, but exhort one another daily, while it is called to day*; (that is certainly, to be upon doing the work of the day) *and so much the more, as you see the day approaching*; Clearly implying, that we should be so far from neglect to spiritual and profitable talking when we meet, that it should be our care so to consider one another, wherein they begin to grow *faint, weary, slow, remiss*, and wanting, as to be provoking or seeking occasion to perswade and put forward such to that, that they ought not to be backward in: This was the Trade of Gods Children as you may read, *Acts* 15. 36. *And some dayes after, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our Brethren, in every City where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do*, Acts 18. 27. *Who when he was come helped them much, which had believed through grace.* This certainly is as true in *Paul* and *Barnabas*, as in *Apollo*: let then I pray you, what hath been said in this *Sign*, serve for caution thus far, that you will all be careful when you eat, when you fast, when you sit by your fire, walk by the way, lie down, rise up, for the avoiding precious times mispending, to be talking of the Lord and his Laws: Consider what you read, and pass to the next.

CHAP. XII.

Proving Unpreparedness to hear the Word of God, a sign of dying to Christ; with three sorts of hindrances, which must be laid aside; and what must be our work, before Hearing, in Hearing, and after Hearing.

SIGN XII.

When you are so little prepared for the solemn Assemblies, that they come before you think of them, or long for them.

When persons suffer themselves to be so taken up with common or worldly business, as that they leave no room for *Solemn Prayer*, and Preparation, to meet in Gods Ordinances at dayes appointed; its an evident token of little reverence besetting the heart, and as little consideration who they are to *meet*: Now to come before the *Lord* in his Assembly, where he is wont to be, and hath promised to be, there doubtless remains a work upon us, to be done by us, by way of *Preparation*, and that because of *Gods presence* being there, as in the Temple, the Type of Gods Assembly or Gospel Church, *Kings* 1. 3. 9. *I will put my Name there, my heart, and my eyes, shall be there perpetually*; his power, presence, and goodness shall be there, and he ever was, and is wont to meet his People there. *Tell me O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest and makest thy flocks to rest at noon; if thou knowest not, go thy way and feed thy Kids by the Shepherds Tents*, Cant. 1. Now that great preparation as to this and that by way of duty ought to be, will appear by what may follow; want to prepare therefore must needs be a character of spiritual decay; and the rather if we consider, how strict the Lord was as to them that

that drew nigh him when he gave out the Law, *Exod.* 19. 10. *And the Lord said unto Moses, go and sanctifie the people to day and to morrow, and let them wash their cloathes; and let the Priests also which come near to the Lord, sanctifie themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.* *Nadab* and *Abihu*, for not sanctifying the Lord when they drew nigh him, *there went out a fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord*, Levit. 10. 2. Most remarkable is that passage in good *Joseph*, Gen. 41. 14. Before he will come into the Kings presence, *he shaveth himself, and changeth his rayment*; layeth aside his prison Garments: How much rather should those prepare and lay aside, that come into the presence of the King of Kings: *Hear the word of the Lord. ye that tremble at his word*, Isa. 66. 5. Persons may hear from day to day, and remain much like the same, rather worse than better; which must needs argue some defect in themselves by unduly approaching near so solemn a Service: I shall therefore in humility offer some directions, what we may do in order to our profit, *before hearing, in hearing, and after hearing.*

First, Before Hearing, pray God bless his Word unto you, and lead you in his way, *Psa.* 25. 4, 5. *Shew me thy way O Lord, teach me thy path, lead me in thy truth; Teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day*, Exod. 33. 15. *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.* This is as true in one case as another.

Secondly, Go to the Assembly with reverent considerations, that you are to meet God, *Amos* 4. 12. *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* *King* Rehoboam *did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord*, 2 Chron. 12. 14. compared

with Chap. 19. 3. *There are good things found in thee, in that thou prepareſt thy heart to ſeek God.*

Thirdly, Before you go to hear, you muſt lay aſide all ſuperfluity, 1 *Pet.* 2. 1. *Wherefore laying aſide all filthineſs and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs, receive with meekneſs the ingrafted Word.*

There are three ſorts of Superfluities to be laid aſide, which elſe will hinder you from profiting.

Firſt, All thoſe doubtful carping cares for the things of this life, you are incident to, *Mat.* 13. 22. *Mark* 4. 19.

Secondly, You muſt lay aſide all thoſe vexatious frets of this life you are incident to, *Judges* 16. 16. compared with 1 *Sam.* 1. 6, 7.

Thirdly, You muſt lay aſide all thoſe pleaſant pleaſing pleaſures of this life you are incident to, *Pſal.* 45. 10. 11. All or any of theſe being carried with us, and heeded by us, will ſo load us, that there will be no room for the Word to profit.

Fourthly, When you come to hear, come with hungring and thirſting, *Mat.* 5. 6. *Pſal.* 42. 1, 2.

The ſecond Direction as to Hearing is, what you muſt do in the time of Hearing.

Firſt, You muſt hear with reverence as Gods Embaſſage, *Pſal.* 2. 11. compared with 89 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the Aſſembly of the Saints, and to be had in reverence by all that are about him.*

Secondly, You muſt hear as Gods Word, *Iſa.* 66. 2. 1 *Theſ.* 2 11.

Thirdly, you muſt hear with attention and godly fear, *Iſa.* 55. 2. *Nehem.* 8. 3. *Luke* 29. 48. *And all the people were very attentive to hear him.*

Fourthly, In Hearing, you muſt mix what you hear with faith, *Heb* 4. 1, 2. *But the word preached did not profit, it being not mixt with faith in them that*

heard

heard it, 2 Chron. 20. 26.

Fifthly, You must receive what you hear in the love of God, 2 *Thes.* 2. 10. *Psal.* 119, 97.

Sixthly, and lastly, You must hear with resolution to obey, *Deut.* 5. 27. *Josh.* 1. 16.

Now what must you do after Hearing?

First, You must remember what ye have heard, 2 *Pet.* 3. 1, 2. Secondly, That you may remember, you must meditate upon it, *Josh.* 1. 8. *Psal.* 1. 2. Thirdly, of all the Sermons you hear, pick out something most profitable, and confer about it, *Mark* 4. 10. Fourthly, You must put into practise what you hear, *Eccles.* 9. 10. *Jam.* 2. 25. *Luke* 11. 2.

I shall now hint three Reasons of this great Care thus to assemble and hear Gods word, and then proceed to the Thirteenth Sign.

First, Because it is the great Ordinance of Conversion. Secondly, The means of a Christians growth, and Sanctification. Thirdly, Negligence in it, a great aggravation of Condemnation.

First, Because it is the great Ordinance of Conversion. The Ordinance of Preaching is Gods usual method by which knowledge of himself is brought to poor sinners: Faith (saith the Spirit) comes by hearing, and hearing is ordained in order to believing; how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a Preacher: Where there is no vision the people perish. When the sins of Professors have been such as to provoke God to send a famine of the Word, such a people have been nigh to destruction.

It is an evident token of Gods great love and good will to sinners, when he is pleased to afford the Gospel: The continuance of it is more needful than the continuance of the light of the Sun, and its removal

more dreadful than a *Famine of bread*; but this hath not such a presence upon our hearts. Christians are not so apprehensive of *Gospel-worth*, nor *Gospel-want*, to prise it, and to praise God for it; and that is a great reason they thrive so little under its continual showers. Do but study what the Gospel is, it is the effect of Gods Love, Christs Death, the Holy Spirits Gift; It is good news to every Creature, all the priviledges of Heaven are made known by the means of the *Gospel*, witness the dark estate of those people who are deprived of it, they worship the Sun, Moon, Stars, Stocks, Stones; yea the *Devil* himself in his own shape appears among them, and converseth with them; the good Lord help *England* and *London* to put a higher value of this great Ordinance of Conversion.

But secondly, It is the means of a Christians growth and sanctification: take away the Word, and you take away his Food; the Gospel is to a Convert as milk is to a new born Babe, even its natural nourishment; the Gospel is that which makes known Gods heart to him, and his own heart to himself, there he hears and reads that blessed attribute of God, that he is great, and therefore the object of all our fear; and that he is good, and therefore to be the object of all our love; and that he is rich, and therefore the object of all our treasure; and that he is all things to all that call upon him in truth. Here a Christian learns to know the nature of sin, and its deceitfulness, the strength of the tempter, his power, policy and malice; yea how weak he is in the hands of his spiritual adversaries, the *Flesh*, the *World*, and the *Devil*, without the help of this Almighty, and learns here to know that through him we shall be made able to do all things, to whom be glory, Amen.

Thirdly, To be negligent to assemble and hear Gods

Gods Word is a great aggravation of our Condemnation. For God to afford the means, and we to abuse that means, by neglecting the season will render us *Bethsaidaes* estate, *Wo unto thee Corazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Tyre and Sydon, they had repented long ago*, Matt. 11. 21, 22. *It shall be more tollerable for them in the Day of Judgment than for such a people.* When our Lord Jesus came near *Jerusalem* he wept over it, and propheſied their desolation, because they knew not the day of their visitation: We are made of God (saith the Apostle) the savour of *life* unto *life* in them that are *saved*, but the savour of *death* unto *death* in them that perish. Gods word shall not return in *vain*, where it doth not soften, it will *certainly harden*. The Condemnation of the people of *England* must needs, to common sense, be much greater than the Condemnation of the Indians that have not the means we have: Woful will our account be in the great day if we are found *unconverted*, or not *mortified* and *sanctified* by so great a priviledge as we enjoy over and above what they enjoy, may not God truly say, You I have called, but you have refused, I stretched out my hands, but were not regarded: the Lord of life was preached among you, and eminently set forth, *crucified before your eyes*; I sent to you by my Messengers, rising up betimes and sending them, because I had compassion on poor *England*, but they would none of my reproof, I will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh. O let us remember this, if the Gospel prove not the means of our softning, it will prove the highest aggravation of our Condemnation.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

Proving the state of such to be sad, who assemble together more for fear of mans eye than Gods: with four Discriptions, how such may be known, (or know themselves) with two Causes of this decay.

SIGN XIII.

When you come to the Assembly, more for fear of Brethren's eye, than Christ's omniscient and all-piercing eye.

That is, you are so indifferent as to coming, that would none miss you nor question you for it, you could dispence well with absence, and that without any material hinderance; 'tis much to be feared that this decay prevails strongly with many Professors, who have neither hungring, or thirsting at least, at that early rate they once had, and still doubtless ought to have, were they not losing their relish to Ordinances, and the fellowship that they have had with God through them; for now they begin to cease looking at things with an eye of faith, and have all or most of their recourse to things after an eye of carnal sense; and so no fear holds them to the outward order of Gods House, but what is taught by the precept of men; and were they not lyable to censures both from the Assembly and others (who have taken notice of their being Professors) could as to the eye and censure of Jesus Christ quit all; wherefore the Lord said, *Isa.* 29. 13. *For as much as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me*; (note that) it is far to many degrees alienated, and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men; it is from hence very

very evident, that they though they did come together, yet it was not from a right principle, their perſon and their heart was aſunder, and God is pleaſed to note them out as people fearing him only with an outſide fear; therefore he will proceed to do a marvellous work upon them: the Prophet *Ezek.* 33. 30, 31. meets with ſuch a people, as are ſtill a quarelling with the Prophets words, and talking againſt him in the doors of their houſes; yet would ſay, *Come I pray and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord, coming as his people come, ſit before him as his people do, hear his word, and with their mouth ſhew much love; but their heart runs after covetouſneſs.* So in the time of the Prophet, *Mal.* 4. 3. there you have a deſcription of a decaying, and growing Profeſſor; one is ſo weary, that they are ready to throw all profeſſion off, crying, *It is in vain to ſerve the Lord, and what profit is it that we keep his Ordinances?* at the ſame time thoſe truly ſpiritual, that feared Gods eye more than mans, *they ſpeak the oftner one to another, fearing him, and thinking upon his Name.*

Alas! Alas! If Satan and the World have got ſuch a part in our heart, that we come to Meetings, to the Fold of Chriſt, with ſuch a common ſenſe and eſtimation, that would none miſs us, it would nothing *trouble us* to be *abſent.* This doth undoubtedly betoken a great benummedneſs of ſpirit Godward, and that the leaſt Argument hath moſt force, namely Brethrens eye; it is a ſtrong ſymptome of a *darkened underſtanding,* and calls for deep humiliation in order to a *recovery* to that ſpiritual frame that once was, it being certain now the appetite is much loſt, and now *Prayer, Hearing, Reading and Feaſting* with the Lord at his Table, eating of his *Bread,* and drinking of his *Wine* are of no eſtimation, and what muſt follow but

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the loss of spiritual *feeling*, and where will this end but in *Atheism*, and living by sense like such are justly branded in Scripture with *twice dead, plucked up by the roots*; for take away the right *ends* of meeting, I mean the *sense* of them from the *heart* in their excellent *uses* and *ends*, and you suffer your selves to be carried into Egyptian darkness.

The same Lord that hath ordained *food* as a great and principal means of *life*, without which none hath a promise in Gods ordinary way to continue his outward being. In like manner hath God ordained and set up as his great light in the world (his Church) where he hath promised his presence shall be, and where he will meet those that meet him in this way; for there he causeth his Flocks to rest at Even, and we have no promise of being fed and visited out of this way of God where it is to be come at; *Thou meetest him that rejoyceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy wayes*, *Isa.* 64. 5. No man in his wits goeth about to gather *Grapes of thorns, or Figs of thistles*; if we expect Gods presence we must seek it in Gods way. It is verily matter of great lamentation that any mortal should come to this pass, what for one whose breath is in his nostrils, that *to day is a Man, and to morrow is Worms meat*, to day above ground, and to morrow under ground; to day a Conversor in the air, to morrow closed up in the Clifts of the earth, there to lie and *rot*, and to be eaten with *worms*, and his place in the world to know him no more, and yet for such a person to lose his reason, and the nobleness of his nature and spirit, so much as to come to the Assembly of Gods people only for fear of mans rebuke or frown; is not he to be feared that *kills soul and body*, and casts them into hell, whose eyes seeth not as mans eye seeth, they only center in appearance, he looketh

looketh into the *hearts*, telling the thougts, seeth the intents afar off, *but all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to doe*, *Heb.* 4. 13.

I shall give two or three descriptions, how such may know themselves, or be known; and so pass to the next Sign.

First, Such when by more or less weighty occasions, they are hindered from the Assembly, you will not find them troubled; whereas a truly growing Christian; though hindered even by God, yet he is thirsting, hungring, and thinks it long, saying with *David*, *O when shall I come and appear before thee*, Psal. 41, 1, 2.

Secondly, Such may be known, and know themselves by this, they are of all others most apt to be discontented, it is seldom but one thing or other troubles them, and goes not as they would have it; whereas the more spiritual, dwels so much in charity with every one, that they are ready to construe every thing to the best; so neither much troubling, nor much troubled.

Thirdly, If any Schism or Faction rise, you shall find these more apt than any other to close with it, and so zealous for a while as passes, but it holds not long.

Fourthly, you shall find such very forward at propagating some lesser matters of Gods Law, while the more weighty they themselves live strangers to; a chief cause of all this is.

First, large zeal, but shallow judgment.

Secondly, a too much prying into the wayes of others, and too little into their own.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Shewing our ſtate dying, when we are more troubled at the decayes in our Houſe, than in Chriſts Houſe; with four marks to know when we are ſo dying.

SIGN XIV.

WHen the decay in Chriſts Houſe, leſs troubles you than the decay in your own Houſe.

This decay wherever found, notes a man very far gone on the dying hand; if Trade decayes, then nothing but complaining, if loſs by fire or ſickneſs, or death, then all is out of order, it breaketh their reſt, they cannot ſleep by night, diſturbs them in the worſhip of God, they cannot *pray, read, or meditate by day*; It is evident with ſuch, the affairs of their own houſe lyeth nearer their heart, than the affairs of Chriſts Houſe, far from a truly growing Chriſtian, who is all out of order when it goeth not well with the Church of God.

Now by decay here in the Sign, I would be underſtood of perſons in Chriſt Jeſus profeſſion, who dye in their *zeal, love,* and *fear,* &c. that begin to walk faintly after Chriſt Jeſus, *flat to prayer, to reading, to hearing, cold and careleſs to ſpiritual viſiting one another*, ſeldom and little in ſpiritual talk, when they meet together, not now as once, make it their trade and their buſineſs to be making the name of Chriſt great where-ever they come; but either ſay nothing, or that that comes to nothing, having no ſpirit or ſavour in it; yet once was early at the Ordinances, quickly troubled if things went amiſs, much joyed when all were in a Holy harmony; but now being diſcovered to have

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loſt moſt of their ſpiritual reliſh to thoſe good things they once flouriſhed in, and this not working trouble of heart on fellow brethren, and beholders, muſt needs argue great decay.

That ſuch decay in Chriſts Houſe, even among thoſe in his ſpiritual profeſſion, hath been, and too too much at this day is very evident both from Scripture and Experience.

Firſt, from Scripture, 1 *Cor.* 3. beginning. *And I Brethren could not ſpeak to you as to ſpiritual, but as to carnal, even babes in Chriſt, whereas there is among you envy, diviſion, and ſtrife, are ye not carnal, and walk as men.*

Firſt, this ſame people as the firſt Chapter makes appear, had ſuch grace from God given by Chriſt Jeſus, that they were *enricht in all utterance, and in all knowledge; ſo that they came behind other Churches in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

Again this holy Apoſtle, in *Epheſ.* 2. 12. complains greatly of their decay; many had *ſinned, and had not repented of the fornication, and uncleanneſs they had committed.* From whence it is very obſervable, that their decay was ſuch, that their *Senſes* or *Feeling* were well nigh departed from them, they were guilty of high crimes, among which were *debates, envyings, wrath, ſtrife, backbiting, whiſpering, ſwelling tumults*; yet not humbled among themſelves for all this: In like manner the *Galathian* Church, *Chap.* 4. That once if it had been poſſible, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, now counts him their enemy for telling them the truth; ſo *Revel.* 3. 17. *Thou ſaiſt I am rich, and increaſt with goods, and have need of nothing; but knowſt not that thou art poor and miſerable, and blind and naked.*

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It would be tedious to tell what experience could ſpeak of the ſame thing in our dayes; are there not many that at their firſt entrance into Chriſts *Vineyard, never thought that they loved enough, heard, prayed, laboured enough,* that had mighty Parts, Gifts and Graces, and did mightily improve them to the beſt ſervices; yet now are grown *huskiſh, dry, and barren,* and rare to hear any ſpiritual expreſſions from them; Now count Meetings burthenſome, *Duties tedious,* ſit as dull under the uſe of Chriſts Ordinances, as though their ſtomach did *loath* now, what was once as the morning dew to them; who can withhold being grieved and afflicted at this, unleſs his eyes be out, and his ſpiritual feeling gone? It therefore may concern all thoſe that read this, to make enquiry with themſelves what impreſſion ſuch tydings as theſe of decayes in Chriſts Houſe, make upon their hearts; for anſwerable to ones eſteem of things, and making any thing their treaſure, will their ſorrow and trouble be to ſee it waſting, whether Husband, Wife, Children, Houſes or Lands, or the proſperity and well-faring of Gods Houſe lye nearer the heart, may eaſily be diſcerned by the effects that will follow; *O Lord, what ſhall I ſay, when Iſrael turns their backs upon their enemies! for the Cananites, and the Inhabitants of the land ſhall hear of it, and environ us round, and what wilt thou do for thy great name?* Joſh. 7. 8, 9. *Joſhua* in the fight or flight might have been taken or ſlain, yet that is not higheſt in his thought, nor lyeth neareſt to his heart; his great fear is what to do for the GREAT NAME, fearing the *Cananite* ſhould have occaſion to ſpeak lightly of it: I would not by what hath been ſaid, be thought to prohibit perſons being troubled at outward decay, that would be a way to hold them from ſuch diligence as ought to be, to remove or prevent it; but

but we may know whether we are less troubled at decay in Christs House, than in our own, by these following.

First, By observing which way the drift of our *praying* to God bends most, where the Shoe pincheth most, there the complaint will be most prevalent. When two straits meet, decay in *Christs House*, and decay in our own, it is a time of tryal which cause or concern hath the highest room in our *hearts*. What persons most value, that they most remember and bend their care to preserve, if in time of *prayer* your spirit run more out for reparation of your own house *Decay* than of the *House of God*; this is lamentable sad, and let it be for a lamentation, though it is truth, decay in our own house, is truly a tryal, and ought to awaken in the work of diligence, yet to give this the chief room, is to preferre the smallest matters before the one thing needful or chief concern. Let us read our imitation *Davids* spirit, *Psal.* 137. 6. *If I do not remember thee let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I preferre not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

Secondly, by observing in which channel our complaints to men run most, as our *praying to God*, if the bent do run most for our own domestick affairs, so in like manner when we meet and greet one another if that be the uppermost in our thoughts, and we big with desire, as it were to be *delivered*; it is evident our concern lies nearer our hearts than *Christs*, else am I bold to affirm where the contrary is, even when pinching straits do possess, it is scarce remembred but occasionally, especially in the height of *Christ* and his *Churches service*, and then comes home that blessed Cordial as to outward things, not to be overcareful, but in every condition by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our requests be made

known to God, who hath said it, and never failed, he will supply all wants in six troubles, and in seaven he never did, nor never will forsake those that seek first his *Kingdom* or concern, but either will give them a full portion of supply in the *kind*, or of content or advantage some other *way*; teaching them from experience to say this is the best condition, a sweet morsel brought out of a bitter herb.

But thirdly, when the thoughts of our own house *decayes* are so *prevalent*, that they molest us in the highest of our spiritual performances, this is a deep sign of little sense of the decay in Christs house, when we cannot *pray, read, hear, watch, fast*, or be in the performance of any Gospel duty, but still *molested*, all this *availeth* me nothing while *Mordecai* the Jew sits at the Kings *Gate*; on the contrary, a truly growing Christian all he is and hath is of no value while it goeth ill with the Church of God, *O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies*, would God we had been content to have dwelt on the other side of *Jordan*, for the *Canaanite* will hear of it, *and what shall become of thy great Name*, this lay so near good *Joshuas* heart, that he mattered not his lying low, so that soared high; now if thou wilt kill all this people as one man, then the *Egyptians* shall hear of it, and will say, *because God was not able to deliver them hath he done this.* Oh rather Lord I beseech thee blot *my name* out of thy book.

Fourthly, Whether in compassion our choice answers the lesser call, and rejects the greater, that is, we will rather put our helping hand to the removing the decay of our house, than Christs house, this is also an evident token of great declension. But how all these Marks may be prevented or removed; I shall God assisting give some brief help, and so conclude this sign.

First

First by shewing the great possibility of spiritual decay or declension from our first love to Christ and his people, both Scripture and Experience doth fully teach, that it is a hard work to begin to do *well*, and cease to do *evil*, and a harder work to continue to *do well*, and remain for years in the same frame of spirit and vigor for God, to flourish like the green Bay tree to renew our strength, and retain our spiritual heat is a very difficult work easie in the *talk* of, but hard in the *walk* of; but it is the hardest *work* of all *to end well*, to remain the same till death doth close up our eyes is a talk so difficult, that nothing short of the mighty power of God can ever bring us to period in it: all the seven flourishing Churches in *Asia* save two blame worthy, though they had many good things in them; yet in danger to be unchurcht, so far from a thorough perseverance in universal obedience: And of six hundred thousand that went after God in the Wilderness but two enter'd *Canaan*. The thousands of cautions in Scripture to *take heed*, *watch*, *pray* doth sufficiently declare how hard a work it is to stand and keep our ground, and on the contrary how easie it is to decline and let go our first unwearied diligence: *My people have committed two evils, they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no water*, Jer. 2. 13. Therefore saith the Spirit to the *Ephesian* Church, *chap. 6.* 11. 13. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against all the wiles of the Devil, and having done all *to stand*; as if the Spirit should say, it is as much as ever you can doe to keep from slipping and *falling* when you have done all, for you fight not only with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness in high places, perswading them to be cloathed with Christian armour on every part,

praying alwayes with all prayer and ſupplication and watching thereto with all perſeverance; what I ſay to you I ſay to all *watch, watch, watch,* and *pray,* three times together gives Chriſt Jeſus this counſel to his Diſciples, leſt they be foild by temptation.

But ſecondly, that the decay in Chriſts houſe, and your own heart may both trouble you when they come, I ſhall humbly offer this bleſſed expedient, that you take *diligent heed* to maintain the *ſame ſenſe* of that undone and helpleſs condition which grace found you in at your firſt converſion to the day of your reſolution: what were you before converſion, *Rebels, Enemies* in your *minds, darkneſs,* Fiends of Hell, Enemies of Heaven, haters of God, full of all iniquity, *your throats are an open ſepulcher, your tongues are full of deceit, the poyſon of Alps under your lips, your mouths full of curſing and bitterneſs, your feet ſwift to ſhed blood, having no fear of God before your eyes.* Was not this your ſtate, can you ever forget thoſe black deeds of darkneſs you traded in, and was given up unto, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures: Do you not remember when the firſt wakening came, it told you that at time you were without Chriſt, which is the *inlett* to all miſery, aliens from the Common-wealth of Iſrael, ſtrangers to the Covenants of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world, which is the final concluſion of *all miſery*; *Epheſ.* 2. 12. Had you died in this eſtate, then what muſt have become of you, for the end of theſe things is death, not temporal only but *eternal*; *for they that doe ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God:* Can you forget thoſe dreadful bitter cries and that anguiſh you were in when the commandment came? Did not ſin then revive & you die? Were not ſuch as this your language, wo, wo is me! am undone, I ſhall be damned to all eternity, *mercy is gone, it is gone, it is too late,*

late, my day is over? Do you not remember that bitter Rowl written within and without, *Lamentations, mourning and woe*? Did not your ſleep depart from you, and your ſtomachs nauſeate its meat? Did not deſire fail, and *Conſcience tear you*? Were not this your frame, and much more in the dayes of your conviction and ſight of Sin. How welcome then would *one ſmile* from Chriſt Jeſus have been, to have heard his Voice in that bitter Agony, but to have whiſpered in thy Ear, *Son be of good chear, thy Sins are forgiven thee*; would not ſuch a word have been as Life from the the Dead; did not your Hearts then ſay, ſpeak Lord, but the word, have mercy on my Soul, waſh me throughly from my iniquity, and cleanſe me from my Sin, for I acknowledg my tranſgreſſion, and my Sins are ever before me; it follows me like a Lion ready to tear my Fleſh in pieces for a Prey! Oh call to remembrance your Confeſſions and Promiſes, look over your *Dyary Book*, did not your Heart and Mouth then beſeech the Lord, that he would forgive your Sin which was great; did you not tell him if the World was yours, you would give it for a *Pardon*, *the firſt born for your Tranſgreſſion*, and the fruit of your Bodies, for the *Sin of your Souls*; ask your Conſcience now, if this and a thouſand times more was not your Language then; did not you ſay, I will lie at thy Majeſties feet, yea feed upon pain, and roul my mouth in Aſhes, let me but find Mercy. Still but Conſcience, and rebuke the *Devil* that goeth about to devour me. Brother Convert, is not this a truth; oh whats the matter now, what meaneth this ſtrang change, doth the decay in Chriſts houſe, and thy own Heart, little or not at all trouble thee, whence is this ſtrange change, wilt thou turn Monſter, that nothing but a Miracle can ſave thee, from a *fatal fi-*

nal fall; what meaneth this bleeting of Sheep and lowing of Oxen; what more in debt to a Saviour, and *leſs humble, leſs thankful, leſs watchful, leſs pitiful, leſs painful*; whither will this bring you, where will it end; oh call to remembrance from whence thou art faln, and repent and do thy firſt work, or elſe God will come upon thee, and remove thy Candleſtick, unchurch and diſmember thee, *except thou repent Rev.* 2. 5. I humbly beg ſuch Chriſtians as are going into this declenſion, that they would duly conſider what hath been offered, and call to remembrance their own evil ways and doings that were not good, and abhor themſelves for ever in Duſt and Aſhes; this will make Chriſt in his Viſits, Mercies, and Chides, yea every ſtate and ſtrait welcome ſtill; ſo will you grow up like the green Bay Tree, yea taller in Humility then the *Cedar* in *Lebanon*: the bleſſing of God bring my poor Mite home to your Hearts, to this great end. *Amen, Amen.*

CHAP. XV.

Shewing that want of weeping in ſome, when others of Chriſts Children with grief are ſtooping, declares ſuch to him a dying: ſhewing alſo in four reſpects how we are to pitty; with four Remedies againſt this Decay.

SIGN XV.

When you can ſee Chriſts Children bowed with trouble, and you not, or little Sympathize with them.

Although affliction cometh not forth out of the duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the ground; yet man

is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward, Job 5, 6, 7. Were the Scripture silent, every mans experience doth sufficiently evidence mans very State here, to be a State of trouble, neither Sex nor Age, nor Employment, nor outward Estate, whither high or low, rich or poor, is exempted from trouble, while there is a *Devil* to tempt, a *World* to allure, a *frail Body of Infirmities*, there will be *trouble*; go to the Court, and there is Hand, Head, and Heart full of *trouble*; the Throne is big with busines still in trouble, in trouble again till out of trouble, that is the present condition; not at all at rest, because it is not otherwise, impatient for a change, and yet as quickly weary of the change when attained; desires still growing, yea, new *motions* still attending *Mortals*: Go to the City and the thousands there, *big* also with business, running hither and thither, some wringing of hands for sorrow; Sickness is come to the windows, and Death to the bed side; here is wailing for an *onely Son*, and there is the *groaning* of the *oppressed*, wishing at Evening, would God it were Morning, and no sooner hath the Sun appeared for some Minutes in its Lustre, but they are wishing it were Evening again; some pineing away with *pinching Hunger*, for want of the Fruits of the Field; others pineing away with a pinching *Disease*, have Meat but no Appetite; some crying out I go Childless, give me Children or else I dye; others wailing at their misfortunes, wo is me that ever I was a Father or a Mother; in rest no where, *Pallace* nor *Prison*, *Market* nor *Closet*, *City* nor *Country*, *Court* nor *Camp*, can claim this one *Prerogative*; Here am I free from *trouble*; the Youth weary of his yoke, the Eye and Conduct of Father or Master is too strait, his Bonds too great to hold long, the Reigne must be lengthe-

ned, or all is out of order, yet but a few Months change every way as ſtrange, this year a Priſoner in the mind, becauſe not at his own hands, making his own proviſion, next year a Slave to a cruel Goaler, looking through Iron Grates ſeaven fold more a Priſoner; Oh, what is Man, where is reſt for him to be found under the Sun. Doth not experience tell us, *Wormwood and Gall* attends us every where, ebbing or flowing every 24 hours, and unſtable as the water; Country life too *Melancholy*, Citty Life too *Jolly*. What period of our Life ſhall we call free, from *Birth* to *Death*; from ſeven dayes old, to ſeventy years old, all *Labour* and *Travel*. Do we not come into the World with crying, doth not *pain* with *Hunger* or *Cold*, pinch us as early as we are born, the heart of the *Father glad to day* that he hath a *Son*, but to morrow much more *ſad*, for the buble diſappeared, and is gone to its place: If we live till ſeven years of *Age*, have we not ſeven Changes by then, is not the beſt of that *Joy* now turned into *VVormwood* with a *Feaver* fit; do we float upon the water a little longer, and make our *Mothers Heart glad*; very poſſible it is, but that it may be the *more ſad* before our Tragedy end, anon comes Tidings the fall of a Tyl, or depth of the *water*, or cruſh of the *wheel* hath broke our curious *Venus Glaſs* all to pieces; but do we float a little longer, and get from under the Wing of our Guardian, arriving at a Marriage State, ere our *firſt born* hath floated one Months in the World, our Months are gone; and thus from Period to Period ſhould we attain to the utmoſt age of Man and length of time, it is all but a *Span*; and here we muſt conclude with the *Preacher*, in much *Wiſdom* is much *Grief*, and he that increaſeth *Knowledge* increaſeth *Sorrow*; *Eccle.* 1. *vlt.* Thus our *vain life* from age to age in all its periods begins with

Crying

Crying, and cloſeth with *trembling*, *afraid of what is high, and fears in the way, and the Almond Tree*, looks white, and the grinders growes low, *and the Graſhopper is a Burden*, *and deſire fails, and Man goeth to his long home*, *and the Mourners go about the Streets*, *vanity of vanities ſaith the Preacher, all is vanity*; and this is your State, this is your portion under the ſame, Oh ye ſons of Men; all this you may read in the book of *Nature*: But come to the Book of *Scriptures*, had not *Jacob* his *trouble*; the days of the years of my Pilgramage are 130 years; *few and evil*, *or troubleſome have they been*, (*Gen.* 47. 9.) *Job* had his *troubles*, and was weary with complaining, *David* bowed down with *trouble*, *Jeremiah* in lamentable *Complaints*, *St. Pauls* words from *Birth* to *Death* may be here taken up, even unto this preſent hour. *We both hunger and thirſt, are naked and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place*, never at reſt wherever we are, nor never ſhall be under the Sun; thus much for explication of this term in the Sign, namely *trouble*, which though it carry a part in the Sign, yet the diſtinguiſhing mark of *decaying in Godlineſs* is, when any of theſe kind of *troubles* are the portion of others, we can ſee it or know it with little or no Simpathy. For when trouble or afflictions of any kind from the Lord, are great upon ſome, it is an evident token of decay in ſuch, as have not a fellow-feeling towards them. *Woe to them that are at eaſe in Zion, and lye upon Beds of Ivory*, *ſtretching themſelves upon their couches to drink their Wine in bowls*, *and anoint themſelves with chief Oyntments*, *but are not grieved for the affliction of Joſeph*, in Amos 6. from the 1. to the 7. Some we may ſee there lived a careleſs life, feeding to the full, had even what heart could wiſh, felt not the trouble in perſon, that at the ſame time

was

was their brethrens portion; yet are not grieved for the afflictions of *Joseph*, but lived at the height of Joy, under their own fulneſs, and were not compaſſionately affected with others penury: This hath been found among the people of God, but ill taken from them, *Numb.* 20. We ſhall find that *Iſrael* was in great diſtreſs, and begs their brother *Edom* (who knew all the travail that had befallen them) to let them paſs by his high way; but he ſhewed them no pitty, was fallen from that ſympathizing Spirit that ought to be in him. God will not forget to take notice of this, and reckon for it; which proves that pitty in his people one to another, is Gods expectation from them, *Amos* 1, 11. *Thus ſaith the Lord, for three tranſgreſſions of* Edom, *and for four, I will not turn away the puniſhment thereof, becauſe he purſued his Brother with the Sword, and caſt off all pitty.*

But ſome may Object and ſay, ſhall we pitty thoſe, (though Gods own people) that have brought by their ſinning, what miſery is come upon them?

Anſw. Yes, God expects this from his peoples enemies, how much rather from their friends *Iſa.* 47. 5, 6, *Sit thou ſilent, and get thee into darkneſs, O Daughter of the* Caldeans, *for thou ſhalt no more be called the Lady of Kingdomes; I was wroth with my people, and gave them into thy hands, but thou didſt ſhow them no pitty, upon the ancient haſt thou very heavily laid thy yoak*; For this cauſe they muſt get them into darkneſs, clearly noting, that though God for his peoples evils, do afflict and trouble them, yet it is not at all, either to warrant his people, or his peoples enemies, to add to the burthen he layeth upon them; but on the contrary calls for pitty, yet not pitty with their ſins, but ſuch pitty as may reduce them from their ſins.

First,

Firſt, in taking notice that they are in miſery, *Remember O Lord what is come upon us, conſider and behold our reproach.* The Church counts it of tendency to her healing, by having her affliction taken notice of.

Secondly, you muſt pitty them in helping them to underſtand the cauſe why it is come *Lam.* 3.36. *Wherefore doth the living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſin.*

Thirdly, Pitty in provoaking them to ſearch and try their ways, and turn to the Lord their God.

Fourthly, Pitty in helping them down; that is, laying the diſpleaſure of God before them to humble them; and when duly humbled, to comfort them; leſt ſuch ſhould be ſwallowed up with over much ſorrow; We may conclude this evil to be very common among profeſſors, and it may call upon them to a ſelf-examining, whether, and wherein they are under this ſpiritual decay; for the removing or preventing of which, I ſhall offer three or four things briefly, and ſo conclude this Sign:

Firſt, to conſider the precepts for this duty, and from whom they come, *Rom.* 12. 10. 14. *Be kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another; weep with them that weep; put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long ſuffering, who is afflicted, and I burn not?*

Secondly, conſider the danger of being wanting here.

Firſt, it makes us moſt unlike God, *in all their afflictions he was afflicted.*

Secondly, It opens a door to let in upon us equal miſery, *Amos* 6.7. *Therefore ſhall they go into captivity, with the firſt that go captive, and the banquit of them that ſtretch themſelves ſhall be removed.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, it leads the way to heart-hardning *Zech.* 7. 10. *Oppress not the widow, fatherless, stranger, nor poor; but they refused to hearken, and made their heart as an Adamant stone.*

A third help against this decay, is to be considering or laying to heart the condition of such, thinking it may now be, and yet may be our own; *you that are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, Considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted, bear ye one anothers burthens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ,* Gal. 6. beginning.

Fourthly, A fourth help against this decay, look to the *Lord Jesus* for your Copy, and write after him, he could see no Saint or Sinner bowed with *trouble* but he had sympathy for them, the Garment of his *pitty* was ready to over spread all persons, and in all conditions; behold his practice for your example—— And great Multitudes came to him, having with them those that were *lame, blind, dumb,* and *maimed,* casting them down at *Jesus feet* (what then) and he healed them saying, *I have Compassion on the Multitude, because they have continued with me three days, and have nothing to eat,* I will not send them away *Fasting* least they *Faint* by the way; How often would he in his pitty have healed *Jerusalem,* and when it was *too late,* and the day of their Visitation over; yet he cannot come near the *City,* but falls a weeping to show his sympathy, though they had sinned past recovery, like that worthy passage *Luke* 10. that left *Jerusalem* or the Church, and went down to *Jerico* or the World, and there fell among Thieves, which stripped him, wounded him, and left him half dead; then comes the *Priest,* he looks on, and away goes he; then comes a *Levite* and looks on, passing away likewise, now comes this good *Samaritan,* and when he saw him

him he went nearer, and had compassion on him, did not only shake the head, and say the *Lord help thee*, be *warmed* and *filled*, but went nearer yet, and bound up his wounds, powring in Wine to chear him in his *fainting*, and Oyle to heal him of his *Grief*, and sets him on his breast, and brings him to an Inn, and takes care of him. In all his peoples afflictictions he was afflicted; let every one of us therefore please with Sympathy his Neighbour, for his good to Edification, *for even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of them that Reproached thee fell on me*, Rom. 15. 2, 3.

CHAP. XVI.

Shewing that when the name of Christ, and credit to his Gospel; is not so dear to us as personal sufferings we are then surely on the dying hand: and that in estate, body, and life, we ought to submit if called to suffering: with four causes of decay here.

SIGN XVI.

When you will rather betray the Name of Christ Jesus, and the credit of this Gospel by your silence; then appear for it to your own suffering and disparagement.

Three things may be observable as to the opening of this Sign.

First, what is meant by the Name of Jesus.

Name refers to his person, and properties, as his power, wisdom, Judgment, mercy, justice, goodness; dishonour done to all or any of these, is done to him, because this is the matter or substance he is made known by, and understood to be; tis clear that

Name

Name in Scripture, when referred to the person of God and Christ, notes all this, *Exod.* 20. 7. *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*, Chap. 33. 19. Chap. 34. 6, 7. *Josh.* 7. 10. *John* 17. and *Acts* 9.

Secondly, how far if called, ought we to suffer for this Name.

Suffering is a word reduceable to three heads, all centring in man.

First, in estate there he may suffer, by having his goods spoiled, his bodily substance wasted, *Heb* 10. 35.

Secondly, in body by persecutions, and reproaches bonds, and imprisonments, *Heb.* 10. 32, 33. chap. 11. 36.

Thirdly, in life, *Luke* 14. 26. *Acts* 21, 15. *Revel.* 12. 12. Now in what cases may we be proved guilty of this dying Sign, as falling under any or all these three heads.

First, If because of our estate we comply with, or countenance any evil, or refuse to confess any good, *John* 12. 42. 2. *Tim.* 4. 10. *Nevertheless among the chief Rulers also many believed on him, but did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue.*

Secondly, if because of our bodies, to free them from sufferings, we will comply with, or countenance any evil, or refuse to confess any good, *Mat.* 13. 21. *But when tribulation or persecution riseth, because of the word, by and by they are offended.*

Thirdly, if because of our lives to free them, we will comply with any evil, or refuse to confess any good, contrary to *Dan.* 3. 17, 18. chap. 6. 16. Under all or any of these considerations, when professors can hear the great name dishonoured, and by their silence suffer it to be betrayed, it is very evident they are dying to the things of God. No man or woman

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in a Christian profession, but one time or another, are lyable to temptations of this kind; that is, to have the Name and credit of Christ and his Gospel, come in competition with their sufferings and disparagements. And answerable to their weakness or strength, so ordinarily is their behaviour to suffer or to sin.

The wisdom of the Serpent not to run into any temptation of this kind, by going without a sufficient Call into such Company, as may villifie and set light by the Name of Jesus and his Gospel, in whose eyes he is not esteemed, nor his Gospel had in any Reputation; must be accompanied with the Innocency of the Dove, that is, if by some providential Call we are there, it will not stand with a Doves Innocency, to hear *Christs Name* and his Gospel reproached, perhaps to the loosing some place of outward Honor, Repute or Profit, you are now it may be in the Synagogue among the worldly Rulers, feasting on their Dainties, and *John Baptist* in his Prisen Fasting with his Lord. And designes on foot to take his head, and if you speak, your great Landlord will not indure you to have his great penniworth any longer, your great Kindred will be ashamed of you, and turn you out of the Synagogue, if you keep not silent, and bear with their Tauntings and Jearings at *Religion*, and hold your peace, be against them in your Heart to still Contience, but as silent, as though you sided with them, to keep their applause; mighty for *Christ* in the *Closet*, where no body else sees you nor hears you, but dumb with silence upon the *Theator*; have any of your Rulers believed on him, may not we in prudence run with this easie stream, rather then in over zeal, hazard all, and run our selves into a Jail, is it not good sleeping in a whole skin, Christ hath my Heart and shall have, and what if in such an *evil time*, I give the Ruler

my

my Mouth, doth not the Scripture say, the prudent shall keep *silence* this time, because it is an *evil time*! Oh, is not this an *evil time*, when a Man shall be laughed out of the Market for but speaking a word on that side the way; and thus carnal reasonings are apt to take with such, who know little of the worth of *Christs Name*, and certainly it is not onely a Sign o fthe decay in Godliness, but a very sinful decay for any Christian professor, to have so little presence of Christ and his Gospel in his Heart, as to suffer upon mature consideration, any Storm whatsoever, to carry him like *Peter* Captive to the denyal. *I never knew him*, I know not what thou sayest, where is that old spirit that was in Gods people under such temptations in time past, I will saith God smite all these people with the Pestilence, and disinherit it them, what then saith *Moses* in his Honourable Estimation of Gods name, *Numb.* 14, 15, 16. *Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the Nations which hath heard the Fame of thee, will speak saying, because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the Land which he swore to them, therefore he hath slain them in the Wilderness*; O Lord, never let my Eyes see this day, but rather blot my Name out of thy Book, then to suffer this reproach to come upon thy *famous Name*. what mean you to weep and break my Hart saith the Holy Apostle, I am ready not onely to be Bound but to die at *Jerusalem*, for the Name of our Lord Jesus; this blessed Name, that is in Scripture *rightly Stiled, wonderful Councellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace*; these names to *Moses, Joshua, Paul, &c.* were more precious then Gold, yea then fine Gold, yea the fairest amongst ten thousand, *even altogether lovely*; but I shall proceed to three or four Causes of this decay, *&c.* which being heeded, may serve also as remedies against this decay.

First,

First, a slavish fear of men, and things pertaining to this life; *Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings*; upon this score, either fearing men, or fearing loosing the things pertaining to this life, as *John* 12. *Many believed but did not confess him, for fear of loosing their place in the Synagogue.* It is much to be feared that with regard to this, *many hear and bear to hear, see and bear to see, know and bear to know*, that dishonour contracted to the name of Christ, and his gospel. that otherwise they would not, and certainly ought not; *have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*; that is, come not in company with them, yet if you must, then rebuke them; for any among their great friends, kindred, or any other, by whom perhaps they have great gain, to bear with swearing, blaspheming, deriding at Religion, or other vain communications plainly argues a great slavish fear to have possessed them.

Secondly, another Cause of this, may be an impotent love; that is, your love to God proves weak or lame; *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear*; *because fear hath torment.*

Thirdly, Unskilfulness in the Doctrine of self-denial, may prove a great Cause of this decay, *Whosoever doth not take up his Cross and follow me, cannot be my Disciple*; *behold I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, bonds and afflictions abide me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to my self, so I may finish my course with joy.*

Fourthly, A doubtful mind of Gods Allsufficiency, and certainty, to make up what damage may come through our care to his name and credit, both in this life, and that to come; Gods All-sufficiency is never

ſo ſeen, as in the time of greateſt ſcarcity, or under the higheſt ſtraits; *Then ſtand ſtill and ſee the ſalvation of the Lord*; and as Gods ſufficiency is never ſo ſeen as then, in like manner he is never ſo obliged as then: When perſons are ſuffering (through his grace) for his nameſake: *They ſhall lay their hands on you, and perſecute you, and bring you before Rulers for my names-ſake; but I will give you a mouth, and wiſdom, which all your adverſaries ſhall not be able to gain-ſay*, Luke 21. 12, 13. but I ſhall leave this to conſideration, and proceed to the 17 Sign of Dying to Godlineſs.

CHAP. XVII.

Shewing, that ſinning through impatience, under Offences, is a certain mark of deep decay; with Objections, and Anſwers, proving the degrees of anger, and three Cauſes why Chriſtians are impatient unto ſin.

SIGN XVII.

WHen at a ſmall offence, you are uſually ſo impatient, that you commit great ſin.

It is not poſſible to live without offences giving, or taking, real or ſeeming; and ſuch is mans frailty in common, that even under ſmall provocations, they are apt to yield to too deep an impreſſion. But for better underſtanding, it may be neceſſary to make ſome Obſervation upon this Sign,

Firſt, As to the meaning of ſmall Offences.

Secondly, As to the kind of impatience here intended.

Firſt, By ſmall Offences is meant, either ſmall with reſpect to the little occaſion that is given, perhaps but ſeemingly; or if real, yet ſo ſlender, as it would be wiſdom to wink at it, and but folly to be moved by it.

Secondly,

Secondly, Smal as coming from the ſmalleſt occaſions, *viz.* earthly; an error of life, as to the things of Heaven, though ſmall, being that that is greater in many degrees, than ſome error that may ariſe from the things of this life, which by God are called the ſmalleſt matters. A Chriſtian may be eaſily re d more or leſs, ſtrong, or ſpiritual, as he is more or leſs affected with the offences that this life miniſter to him; *Whereas there is envyings, debate, and ſtrife among you, are ye not carnal and walk as men?* 1 Cor. 3. 2.

Now the kind of impatience here intended is, for ſmall offences to be ſo moved or inraged, as to run beyond the bounds of Gods allowance, *Be angry but ſin not; let not the Sun go down upon your wrath*; Intimating a great aptneſs in perſons, when provoked to be ſo inraged as to continue and boyl in wrath, ſeeking for revenge, contrary to Gods Councel, *be in malice as Gods Children.*

Object. But it may be objected, whether an allowance of anger, or impatience under provocation may not be.

Anſw. There is an anger in good part, and in bad part, ſo to take offence or be angry, or impatient, as to thirſt after perſonal revenge, or requital; ſurely it is not good: *He that is ſo angry with his brother ſhall be in danger of Judgment; for in their anger they ſlew a man, and in their wrath they digged down a Wall, curſed be their anger, for it was fierce*, Gen. 49. 6, 7. Here impatience is taken in ill part, and by Chriſtians to be abhorred and avoided, it being not of that kind, *Exod.* 32. 19. *And Moſes anger waxed hot*; full of zealous and ſore diſpleaſure; not ſimply againſt their perſon, but againſt their ſin. Thus God is ſaid to be angry with his people, when by their ſins they provoke him, *Numb* 11. 10.

But impatience and anger in ill part, is ſuch as runs out to the breaking the hedge of Government, running

ning into cursing, swearing, tumults, fightiug, or brawling.

Object. 2. But it may be again Objected, that the Sign it self seems to give allowance of great anger, or impatience, under great Offences; for it saith, *When at a smal offence you are so impatient, that you commit great sin.*

Answ. Doubtless under great Offences, greater displeasure may be manifested; but let the growing heaven-born Christian, set up his standard here, that at no offence small or great, he may dare at any hand to break down the wall; in a word, *Be angry and sin not*, Ephes. 4. 26. By this means we make our quarrel, Gods, to whom vengeance belongs, and he will righteously repay, otherwise, that is, when impatience carries us into the path of sinnnig. we make the quarrel our own, and take Gods work from him, and so incur his displeasure upon us: The good Lord give in wisdom and strength to Christians here, under all provocations, whether great or small, in Church or Family, from friend or enemy, that they *let patience have its perfect work*, rather to the suffering any wrong, then committing the least sin; How like our Head the Lord Jesus would this declare us to be? *who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, yet when he was reviled, reviled not agin, when he suffered threatned not*, (took it most meekly) *and committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

Object. 3. But it may be objected again, whether by this Superiours as Governors, Parents, or Masters, may or not be angry with their Inferiours?

Answ. Yes, and correct them to, but it must be as their drinking was in *Esthers* time, according to the Law of Gods allowance; Read for our rule in this case, (and let us live and die by it) *Nehem.* 5. 6, 7, 9. *And*

I

I was very angry when I heard their cry, and these words; then I rebuked the Nobles and Rulers saying, It is not good that you do, ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the Heathen our enemies. O let Christians make this their rule under all provocations, to keep within the fear of God, because of the reproach of the Adversary; yea, let your provocation be what it will, or from whome it will, *friend or enemy, child or servant*, them that have most cause or least cause, still remember and keep to this, it is better ten thousand times ten thousand, patiently to suffer, than impatiently *to sin* and suffer too; by the one, others do us wrong; by the other we do our selves wrong: St. *Paul* meets with some Christians in the *Corinth* Church under this Dying Sign, 1 *Cor.* 7. 6. *Brother goeth to Law with Brother, and that before the unjust too*: He prescribes the Remedy, that they rather *take wrong* (though from Brethren) *and suffer themselves to be defrauded.* The Proverb is worth our heeding in this kind, (it will not countervail our cost) better patiently take the wrong, than with sinning seek our right.

I shall now come to two or three Causes of this Decay, which being observed and avoyded, may also serve as Remedies against this decay or dying Sign.

First, the first Cause, want of Government over our own spirits.

Secondly, Too high esteem of worldly Injoyments.

Thirdly, Cumbring our selves with any business.

For the first, *viz.* Want of government over our own spirit; that is, not being Lords over our own Passions, having them at our Christian beck, when to be angry, and to what degree, Ignorance of our bounds here, make us *Beast like*; *I were envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked; saying, I have washed my heart in vain, and cleansed my hands in innocency,*

Pſal. 73. *So fooliſh and ignorant was I, even as a Beaſt before thee. He that hath no rule over his own Spirit is like a City without Walls and broken down.* Want of government over our own ſpirit, makes us as naked or deſolate, as an unfortified City, whoſe Walls are broken down, *Prov.* 25. 28.

Secondly, Too high eſteem of worldly Injoyments; He that will hardly be moved at a bigger thing, will not eaſily be moved for a pin; All offences are a kind of loſs, being ſomething that croſſeth the grain of our ſpirit; now anſwerable to the eſtimation we have more or leſs of our loſs, will our offences taking be; It is putting too high a value of earthly Injoyments, as Husband, Wife, Children, Houſe or Land, Gold or Silver, that makes us ſo impatient at their loſs or leaving; *Set your affection,* ſaith St. Paul, *on things above, not on things below; The time is ſhort, it remaineth that they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they weep not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not,* 1 Cor. 7. 29. The Apoſtle would have them to carry about with them their outward Injoyments, as a Traveller carries his old Coat about with him, every day thinking to throw it of; and if he looſe it, or be robbed of it, doth not much trouble himſelf, for he ſets little value upon it: Would Chriſtian Travellers ſeek to ſoar high in their affections, how little would this little little worldly pelf, ſeem to us in our getting or looſing, 1 *Cor.* 6. 2. *Phil.* 3. 8.

Thirdly, A third cauſe of our Impatience, and a third Remedy againſt it is, to avoyd much cumbring our ſelf with any buſineſs; that is, a filling our hands too full, over charging our ſelves, taking more upon us, than we are able to manage with ſubmiſſion to better things, and ſo hinder mediation and contemplation about thoſe laſting things of Heaven; which occaſions a freezing

zing of the spirits, and so we sin and fall as every little trouble comes in our way; whereas a joyful spirit, that is inlarged and at liberty, *Bears all things, believes all things, endures all things, is not easily provoked*, as 2 Cor. 13. at large shews: all this while a spirit cumbred is in bondage, and quickly fretted, like a scald head soon broken; *Take heed least at any time your heart be overcharged*, Luk 21. 34. *I would have you be without carefulness*, 1 Cor. 7. 32. *Martha, Martha, thou art troubled, and cumbrest thy self about many things*; but *Mary* hath *made choice, or busied her self about that good part that shall never be taken from her*, Luke 10. last. Consider what you read, and the good Lord give you understanding. Amen.

CHAP. XVIII.

Proving those Christians to be almost dead, that make it more their business, to get the Form than the Power of Religion; with Causes and Remedies.

SIGN XVIII.

When you are more careful to get the words of Christs People, than the spirit of Christs People; the Form than the Power.

That is, the name and out-side of Reformation, rather than the spirit and power of Reformation; when the strength and bent of all their care, lies in trimming thy self to appear before men righteous or religious. Persons may go very far in this with great self-security, resting barely upon outside performances, getting fine words, and painted expressions, making a great show of their worship, Pharasaical like, and at the same time live under the dominion of some *base lust*, *Isa.* 1. 11, 12, 14, 14. *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrafices*

Sacrifices to me, ſaith the Lord? I am full of the burnt Offerings of Rams, and fat of fed Beaſts; I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or Lambs, or Hee-goats: When you come to appear before me who hath required this at your hands to tread my Courts? Your new Moons and appointed Feaſts, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them, for your hands are full of blood. They were then under the guilt of ſin, or dominion or both, and yet at the ſame time full of outward ſervices, and mighty buſie in their Worſhip, *Hear ye this ye men of Judah, that enter in at theſe gates to worſhip the Lord, Do not truſt in lying words, ſaying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord; for the Temple of the Lord is this, If ye throughly amend your Ways and doings; if you throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, and oppreſs not the poor, fatherleſs, or widow; in this I delight. Jer. 7.* It is clear here alſo, theſe reſted meerly in outwards, and lived under the dominion of very baſe luſts, at the very time they ſeemed ſo zealous for the Lord.

And it is very much to be feared, many now adayes run in the ſame channel, *Ezek. 33. 31, 32. Come I pray you and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord; and they come before thee as my people do; and with their mouth ſhew much love;* (but mark at the ſame time) *their heart runs after Covetouſneſs.* Theſe were Hypocrites in Zion, that ſhelter themſelves in the outſide of Religion, *Covering Gods Altar with tears*, Mal. 2. 8, 13. Yet he regards them not, ſeeing ſuch to be but nominal Chriſtians, and therefore abhors them exceedingly: The Scripture ſeems to intimate this as a very common overſpreading weed, not rare to be found, but rather rare to be avoided in profeſſors. Let us therefore all look to our ſelves, *prove our own work, ſo ſhall we have rejoycing in our ſelves alone*, Mat. 23. 14. 15.

for

for a pretence make long prayers, Rom. 2. 18, 19, 20. *Behold thou art called a Jew, restest in the Law, makest thy boast of God, being confident that thou thy self art a guide of the blind, a light to them in darkness*; at the same time under the *dominion of Sin.*

But what may be the Causes of this, that persons should take such pains in Religion, and at the same time be but meer painted Sepulchres?

Answ. First, gross ignorance } Temporal advance-
Secondly, Carnal security. } ment.

First Gross ignorance, that God did never institute Laws for Laws sake, but for his Name sake, and sinners saving; never placing happiness in them, but in him that is the Author of them. O then what ignorance and madness is it, for people to content themselves with flesh-circumcision; God will punish such with the uncircumcised, *Jer.* 9. last. *Behold the dayes come, saith the Lord, that I will punish the circumcised with*, or as truly as, *the uncircumcised*; for the one hath it not in the flesh, and the other not in the heart.

Secondly, Carnal security; That is, dream they shall be accepted because great Prayers, great Preachers, great goers to Church (though this be good in it self) yet this is filthy and bad, when either it is alone or rested in; *When they shall say, peace and safety, then suddain destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a Woman with child, and they shall not escape*, 1 Thes. 5. 3.

This Carnal security is like to prove the *damning sin* of thousands in our very Age, it appeareth in Scripture to be one of the common sins of Professors; in the time of Noah, they eat, drank bought, sold, married, and gave in marriage, that is things lawful in themselves with submission to more noble employment, was not condemnable, but this is that they were given up to

these,

these, as if they did wholy addict themselves to these, as to a Trade; it was all they bended their minds unto; the man in the Gospel was secure that went into the Marriage without the Wedding Garment; the five Virgins was secure, the five Churches in *Asia* was secure, though in danger, and threatned without speedy repentance, to be spewed out of Gods mouth; doth not this *Carnal Security* raign greatly among many Professors in our own experience (may we not fear) take up their rest and hope, for *Salvation*, upon what they have done, leaning upon a read, have Sheets not large enough to cover them; are we not apt till our works are stormed by eminent danger and approach of *Death*, to neglect the preserving all, and all manner of diligence, to make or prove our Calling or Election sure, by going on in the daily Addition of *Faith*, *Vertue*, *Knowledge*, *Temperance*, *Patience*, *Godliness*, *Brotherly Love*; are we not as barren of true spiritual increase, and at best but, or less, lively then twenty years agone, and yet please our selves with the hopes of Salvation, never considering on what foundation our *hopes* are *grounded*, for *confidence* of being saved, is in many wicked livers, whose Works declare, their Faith is not a Faith of the Gospel kind, which purifieth the Soul; therefore every *confidence* of *Salvation* is no *Faith* of *acceptance*, with *God*, unless it be accompanied with understanding of that truth it founds his Confidence on; may not this call for wayling on all hands, to behold and hear thousands in our Land, that belch out their hellish Oathes and imprecations, upon trifling occasions, uttering vain hopes for *Salvation*, while at the same time they swear themselves into *Damnation*, and yet who so confident as they, unto whom not onely but even to the best of Professors, I humbly recommend these six Scriptures, for proof of the truth of their estate of acceptance

tance with God. Rom. 8. 10. *And if Christ be not in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness.* 2 Cor. 5. 17. *Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new Creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new* Galat. 5. 24. *And they that are Christs have Crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* Chap. 6. 14. *But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is Crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* 1 John 2. 6. *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walke, even as he walked.* Chap. 3. 3. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifyeth himself even as he is pure.*

Thirdly, Temporal Advancement, although it is not an infallible Mark of Sincerity, when it is certain by the Profession of Christianity we meet with Temporal disadvantage, Loss in Trade, Reputation, yet it is a considerable Argument to ground a Charitable beliefe of the truth of Sincerity in such a person; and, indeed, was a prevailing Argument with the Primitive Christians to admit Disciples at the first Confession of their Faith into a Gospel-Church, and not much of any further Enquiry into the manner of their past-Life; for, that it could not rationally be presumed they did lightly attempt what they desired, in regard such certain loss by the Cross did attend the same; but, on the contrary, it is very evident in the Scripture, that the fear of the Cross kept many from following Christ; for, among the Chief Rulers there was not a few that believed on him, but durst not Confess, for fear they should be turned out of the Synogogue: and it is as cleare many did leave all to follow him, to take part with his hard fair, neither *Shooes* sometimes to their *Feet*, neither *Meat* nor *Money*, so that if they had not Faith enough to trust God for their Provision, without

without any visible way to Sence, must even quit *Christs* Yoak, or not come under it, and take their own way for their own supply; but on the contrary, when Temporal Advancement is as visably probable to attend the Profession of Religion, and that it is very much to be presumed in the eye of Sence, that it will advance Trade, and occasion an increase of Reputation: in such a day as this, it very nearly concernes such as are under this probable Temptation, to take considerable heed they do not run before they be sent, that is, do not leap into the outside of Profession for Professions sake, because it is so much in fashion, that they are in a very faire way to obtain the Rulers Favour by it; for, it is very certain the Rulers Favour hath proved a wofull Snare to many, to quit a good Conscience, when the contrary turned to their advantage, though at last it hath brought them to the *Weeping-Cross*, like King *Henry* the Eights Favourite, that with wofull Cries upon his *Death-bed*, told the King, Nothing now were his trouble, like this, that he had been more Faithfull to Him then to his *God*, and were now like to meet with a *wofull reward*, for that he had studied more to please Him then his Maker. Though extreame Poverty be no sufficient Argument to obstruct persons, being upon their Profession admitted into *Christs Fold*, because the Poor receive the Gospel in *Christs* account, yet certainly this Text hath been much misconstrued, and doth not onely intend Temporal Poverty, but Poverty of Spirit; yet, How many Carnall Empty Spiritually Poor, as well as Temporall, have in our day made more hast than Godsspeed, or for the Churches *Peace*; to get into the Fold more for *Loaves* then *Love*: not that this is to hinder, or suppose that none extreame Poor in Outwards can be Sincere; but, as it is a Material Circumstance,

ſtance, that ſuch as are Wealthy, can have little by-end, to joyn themſelves in Fellowſhip with that People where Weekly Charge will call for their continued aſſiſtance to Communicate the ſame. In a word, neither Condition of Temporal Advancement, or its contrary (as both attend our Profeſſion in Religion, can be without their Temptations) and often, as one hath ſlain its Ten thouſands the other hath ſlain its Thouſands; ſo that there is no ſafety, nor ſeaſon for Security in either Condition, but an abſolute neceſſity of being ſtill upon our Watch for moſt of the Spirit of *Chriſts* People, and leaſt of the contrary, and ſo I paſs to the next Sign of dying in Godlineſs.

CHAP. XIX.

Containing in it a deſcription of a decaying Chriſtian, by his light trouble at Miſcarriages, though known to Gods eye, while kept from Mans eye, with Three ſpecial Cauſes of this Decay.

SIGN XIX.

When you are not much troubled at your own Miſcarriages, while they are kept from publick view.

By Miſcarriages here, I would be underſtood, the failings and fallings of Gods Children, not wilfully nor altogether willingly, but through infirmity being overtaken, or as it were inſnared before they are aware, yet truly privy to what they have done, and not ignorant they have gone out of the way: Nevertheleſs if their going thus far in ſight and ſenſe of uneven walking, be found without much trouble, it is moſt evident then their caſe is very ſad; *Now who is he that lives*

lives and ſins not? 1 King. 8. 46. And who is he that can hide what he doth from an All-ſeeing-eye, *Pſal.* 139. 7. And what is it that puts diſtinction between *a good mans ſinning, and a bad mans ſinning?* but that the one ſins with all his will, the other, with ſcarce any of his will; to the one what he doth is matter of delight; to the other what he doth is his ſickneſs; though it is true he doth it, yet his heart is grieved for it: now the more or leſs a good man is troubled upon this ſcore, the more or leſs is his decay; where the awful ſight of *Gods eye* is much reverenced, there all Miſcarriages are ſoon diſcerned and much avoided; but the leſſer any man is beſet with this grace, leſſens his fear to the greater, and heightens his fear to the leſſer: that is, *Gods eye* is not ſo much run from as mans eye: one of the higheſt temptations to ſin being *ſecreſie*; and one of the greateſt ſeaſons to try whether a man hath good will to do amiſs or no; it having in it no kind of let to touch his ſenſitive part, with care or fear to eſchew it, becauſe that viſible ſhame that ſin brings, in all probability cannot come; then Satan is at work mightily, having the higheſt opportunity, unleſs the Conſcience be fouud very tender, to ſtrike the heart into a trembling ſenſe of that *piercing eye of the Almighty*; ſaying with *Job, Doth not he ſee my wayes, and count all my ſteps?* Chap. 31. 42. What elſe can hinder cloſing with temptation to a high degree? now ſuch miſdoing as this, of ſecret ſinning, found in any, and they not much troubled becauſe it is not made known; let the ſin they have committed be never ſo ſmall in account: yet a ſin doth prove ſuch very deſolate of the Grace of God.

Amnon, one of *Davids* Sons, being evil diſpoſed towards *Tamar* his Siſter, is not thoughtful at all of *Gods ſecret eye*, but careful how to avoid *Mans Eye*; as

as this saying proves, *Have all Men out from me,* 2 Sam: 13. 9. none but *Tamar* must stay with him, towards whom he is wickedly designed, running into Gods eye without all fear, so he may run from Mans eye: It was not thus with good *Joseph Jacobs* Son, when he had as much if not more secresie, and the temptation without very strong, to have drawn him into high miscarriages; at such a time in a resisting way, gives this reply, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* Gen. 39. 9. In like manner *Annanias* and *Saphira*, that sold their Possessions, under pretence of giving the price as a Free-will Offering to the Lords use; but when required to speak the truth, whether or no they kept any thing back, in fear to Mans eye rather than Gods eye, sins at a high rate, *Lying*, as the Scripture gives it, *to the Holy Ghost*, Acts 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. But as it is the practise of decaying Christians, to be most careful to keep their Miscarriages from Mans eye: in like manner, their sorrow at the sight of sin, is distinguishable to be different from the sorrow of the growing Christian; though his miscarriage may be only known to God. saying, with *David*, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this wickedness in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest:* On the contrary, as *Jeremiah* complains, *I hearkned and heard, but they spake not aright, no man repented him of his evil, saying, what have I done; every one turneth to his own course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel.* But I shall proceed to the Causes of this decay, which may be referred to these three; *First*, Blindness in the Understanding; or *Secondly*, Want of Fear to God; *Thirdly*, Want of Love to God. (1.) Blindness in the Understanding, this may be called the Evil of Evills, for that it is the *Devils Grand Anvill*, on which he

he doth Frame the first beginnings of *all evill*; he is rightly stiled the Prince of darkness, because his works are done most of all on persons *Dark* in the *Understanding*, which makes us fit matter for him to trade with: for, whatsoever Man doth entertain as his Choice, be it good or bad, it is received by the Understanding, which must be satisfied with some valuable, real, or seeming worth in it, before it is accepted: As Vertue is a Jewell worth all our Labour, and fit to be purchased at any rate, because of the excellent advantage it doth ennoble and enright persons unto, and for which many have given up themselves, so valuable is its purchase; yet is it of no more worth to a depraved understanding, then the choisest Colours to a man naturally blind; in like manner, Sins and Miscarriages against God, their dreadful sting being *hid* from the *Understanding*, a Carnal Professor not seeing with those eyes what a *reward* is laid up in God for Vertue, and what a *Punishment* is prepared of God for *Iniquity*, proves a leading Argument with the Flesh, to call *Vertues wayes too strait* and *troublesome*, and the way of *Sin* at the same time as the Stolne waters, *sweet and pleasant*; this is the true cause why the All-piercing eye of God is not reverenced, as the greatest Tye both to avoid Sin or Miscarriages, and to be troubled for any progress in that Rode; for, a truely enlightned understanding represents the presence of God allwayes so near, as that it seates a reverence of this God in the heart, rooted, and in the life evidenced, *Psal.* 16. 8. *Psal.* 109. O Lord, saith *David*, thou hast searched me, and known me, thou knowest my down sitting, and up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts a farr off, and art acquainted with all my wayes; here is an open passage in *Davids* understanding for the All-piercing eye of God, whom he knowes

knows to be *a Heart ſearcher*, *a Vertue rewarded*, *a Sin puniſher*; and therefore after he had made his acknowledgment of Gods Omnipreſence, with this pertinent and powerful Application in Prayer to him; cloſeth all, ſaying, *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlaſting*; that is, in the Path of Vertue, which certainly centers in eternal happineſs. *Pſal.* 139. 1, 2, 23, 24. This was *Davids* frame.

But when our Underſtandings are ſo depraved, that we can walk on ſmoothly, like the Harlot, ſaying, Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us ſollace our ſelves with love, for the good man is not at home, he is gone along journey: Hear i the abſent eye of the Husband, he is gone a long journey, what now is in the way? her Underſtanding is ſo blind as to the perceiving privity of God, he is not in her thoughts once to make anſwer; but God is near and ſeeth my ways, and counts my goings in like manner. The young Man being void of underſtanding goeth after her ſtraight way, not knowing that the dead are there, and that her gueſts are in the *depths of Hell*.

Secondly, Want of the fear of God, is a cauſe of this decay, he whoſe heart is poſſeſt with the *fear of God*, as knowing his greatneſs and goodneſs, his mighty power and arm to *ſave or deſtroy*. Though ſuch an one wants no power or ſecrecy, to offend this God by committing actual evil againſt this God, yet dare not, cannot, will not do it; but were it not for *the fear of God*, *could* and *would* do what they cannot, nor dare not. The King of *Egypt* commands the *Hebrew* Midwives, that if a Son were born, they ſhould kill him; and who then ſhall blame them, ſeeing a

King commands them: But the *Hebrew* Midwives feared God, and did not do as the King of *Egypt* commanded them, but saved the Male-children alive, *Exod.* 1.17. Good *Nehemiah* had as great a power to exact heavy burdens as any of the former Governors that had been before him, but acquitteth himself in these words, *So did not I, because of the fear of God.* These persons wanted neither power, nor secrecy, to have complied with the temptations before them; yet they are held by this precious Grace, *the fear of God.* When the Holy Scripture mustereth together a Tribe of Hellish actions, Mens throats an open Sepulcher, their tongues full of deceit, the poyson of Aspes under their lips, their mouthes full of cursing and bitterness, their feet swift to shed blood; as a reason of this list of black Deeds, the Holy Spirit tells us, *The fear of God is not before their eyes, Rom.*3. 18. That is, they have not a reverential apprehension of the Majesty of God as present in all places, and at all times, always beholding both the evil and good actions of them that feareth or sweareth an Oath; so that it is the expres charge of God, to his Heaven-born Children, in order to their certain progress in Grace, that they put on, as their cloathing, the garment of the fear of the Lord all the day long; and if we look for that priviledge of calling God Father, then to pass the time of our dwelling here in fear, 1 *Pet.*1.17. assigning it as an essential, not onely to the well-being, but to the very being of Christianity; without which kinde of habitual fear, it is not possible to have the Root of the Matter in us. By all which it is evident, that if our secret sins, are not our deep sores, although kept from mans eye, that we are very destitute of the fear of God.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Want of love to God, is a cause of this decay; did we love him as we ought, we would not so wound him as we do? our Ignorance, what a great God the Lord Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and the Seas and Fountains of Water? that did but say, Let there be light, and there was light; that did but say to the proud Waves of the Sea be still, and they obeyed his voice. that did but command the East Wind to blow, and the Red Sea became as dry Land: And at the next voice of his word returned in its full strength, and devoured the King of *Egypt*, and all his Chariots and Horsmen, so that not one of them escaped. Our sweet Singer of *Israel*, when he comes to make this his meditation, cryes out in his great sence of the Majesty of God, What ailed thee O Sea, that thou fleddest! thou *Jordan*, that thou wast driven back! ye Mountains, that you skipped like Rambs, and ye little Hills like Lambs! O said *David*, I will tell thee, O my Soul, what was the matter! *The presence of the Lord was there, tremble thou Earth at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the God of* Jacob, *which turned the Rock into a standing Water, the Flint into a Fountain of Water!* As if he should say, If thou didst but understand his greatness, and his goodness, thou wouldst both fear him and love him.

Now the Understanding doth not embrace Truth with desire, because it is a Truth, for so is Hell; but because it is an useful, desireable, suitable, and durable Truth, so is God: Did we know him, we should love him; and the more we increase in knowledge of God, the more we shall grow out of love with our selves, and increase of love to God; for God is love, and answerable to the knowledge we have of his Loveliness. Will our affection be drawn out to him, it is

love makes the Law eaſie; it was Chriſts *love* made him bear with *Peter*, and ſeek to reſtore him ſo early, after he had denied him ſo ungratefully. And it was the Seed of true love in *Peter*, that drew him upon Chriſts new admonition to weep ſo bitterly. The love of the Lord underſtood by a ſinner, his Creation love, his Redemption love, his Vocation love, and Salvation love, being all free loves, without the leaſt Merit, makes the Soul look back, and ſee its ſins in its woful Die; then looks forward and ſees its Lord with the Print of the Nails in his hands, and the print of the Spear in his ſide. And now appears Chriſt full of love, and now the Soul is ſick of love. From hence ariſeth true hatred for ſin as ſin; and now no need to be ſuſpected not to weep for ſuch miſcarriages, as are kept from publick view; and here is then the true diſtinction between a real, growing, and but a ſeeming Chriſtian; the one, his ſin is his ſore, becauſe God ſees; the other, his ſin is his ſore, becauſe Man ſees.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

Shewing the heart very bad, when under faults it cannot bear plain dealing; with three Causes of this badness; and directions for the Christian admonisher to take six Companions along with him.

SIGN XX.

When you love least those Christians that deal most faithfully with you, in the opening your sores, and tendering your Remedies.

It is a stronger evidence of a bad Spirit, when persons come to this pass, either they must be unsensible of their bad state, or else willing to continue in it through a hardened heart; but may be easily discerned in a Church, either by their itching at most plain soul-searching Doctrine, or their estrangedness to the most zealous spiritual Brethren; and if there be a luke-warm Christian in the Church, a thousand to one but he is most of their society; they may also be known by this, they are greatest strangers to the difficultest duties; 'tis hard to bring them to early duties, and as hard to hold them at late services; in a word, you may have their company, but it must be at services most easie, when some outward credit may accrue to them by their profession; then none shall seem more apt and active then themselves, and God that best knows this, greatly abhors this; and will chastise such Churches as are not careful to remove, and will also in due time, make such persons by one means or other, so manifest, that he that runs may read them; but as

there are such that will not like them that deal faithfully with them; even so, there are some that out of personal respect to such, and for fear to lose their favour, will not tell them so nakedly of their sores; but in love to their persons speak faintly of their sins, and so hate their Souls. In shew these are a mans greatest friends, but in truth his greatest enemies, witness the false Prophets, 1 *Kings* 22. 6. *Shall I go against* Ramoth Gilead *to battel, or shall I forbear? and they said go up, for the Lord hath delivered it into thy hand.* And when a Prophet of the Lord one *Micaiah* is called for, *vers.* 13. They would fain have seduced him to speak good words, as they called it, that is pleasant promises, though they were lyes; Thus we may see the property of some false Prophets, that for an Angel will cry up a person as if he were almost an Angel, it was even so in *Jeremiah's* time, *Chap.* 8. *They have healed the hurt of the Daughter of my people slightly, crying, peace, peace, when there was no peace.* When God would not, nor righteously could not, speak peace but war, because of their misdoings; yet these false Prophets make promises of peace to them; though in their sins, that as God by the Prophet *Ezekiel* complains, Chap. 13. *Sowe pillows under arm-holes for pieces of bread, and handfuls of barly.* Sparing what he would have destroyed, and destroying what he would have spared.

It is a very great Judgment upon a Church or people, to have such amongst them, as will speak peace to any out of the way of peace; it is as bad a judgment upon those persons, that love not those that speak war to them, when their impenitency speaks the same; yet of such the Apostle St. *Paul* complains, *Gal.* 4. 15, 16. *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?* Doubtless these *Galathians* speak

ſpeak in their hearts as much, as others ſpeak of the Prophet *Amos*, *Chap.* 7. 10. who ſay, *The land is not able to bear his words*; once this ſame Church could have pulled out their eyes (if it had been poſſible) to have done this ſame Apoſtle good; Now counts him their enemy for telling them the truth.

Before I paſs to the cauſes of this decay, I ſhall offer ſomething by way of Caution, touching the ADVISOR and the ADVISED; Firſt to the Adviſor.

I have ſeen in my experience many an uſeful and needful admonition, prove as Water ſpilt upon the ground, for want of *Six Companions*, that the Chriſtian Admoniſher in his faithful dealing with his Brother in the opening his Sores, and tendring his remedies ought always to bring along with him; their names are worthy to be known, and their Company prized in this Caſe. The name of the Firſt, is *Conſideration*: the Second, is *Love*: the Third, is *Time*: the Fourth, is *Matter*: the Fifth, is *Manner*: and the Sixth, is *End*.

Firſt, Conſideration; Have I heard or ſeen my Brother commit a Treſpaſs. Now what ſaith Conſideration? It firſt goes to Prayer in its Cloſet; and then adviſeth me to weigh the Treſpaſs in Gods Ballance, whether Great or Small, whether againſt the Firſt Table or Second, or both, whether more Accidental or Habitual; under what Circumſtances of Aggravation, leſs or more; whether hurryed by the Strength of Temptation; and ſo Sin fought him: or whether the Temptation Remote, and ſo *he ſought the ſin*; and thus Conſideration doth its office, as to the Sin; but keeps all in his *own breaſt*, till a further progreſs; and having conſidered the Sin and its Degrees. Now *Conſideration* weighs the *Conſtitution*, and *Condition* of the Perſon; What elementary influ-

ence of the Heavens, hath most impression upon him naturally; Is he *mild* or *Chollerick*? Is this his addicted Sin, that which hath influence upon him, that which he is most apt to of all other to be taken with, his right *eye sin*, or his right *hand sin*, his *Dalilah*, his *Absolom*; thus and thus having weighed, he passes judgement in his Spirit; and now calls for his next door Neighbour, LOVE and discourseth the matter with him; and this is the second Companion, namely *Love*, that is to go along with him.

Now saith *Love*, I have heard or seen this Brother Trespass; but a I am fit person to deal with him for this Trespass? Do I with a fervent heart *Love him*, if not, I am not fit to go along with Consideration to him, for if I *Love* him, I shall do all in *Love*, and not through passion overdo; some Christians have shown so much *want of Love* in their Admonitions, that while they have pretended it was the Lords quarrel, have managed it with so *little Love*, as though it were their own; therefore saith Love, if I hate his sin, and love his person, I may be useful in Considerations Company; but I am sure I do dearly Love him; and therefore will make Gods words my rule, which hath commanded me, Let all your works be done in Love; and now Love calls its next door Neighbour, namely, TIME, and that is the Third Companion.

Now saith *Time* to Consideration, you have been with God at prayer in your Closet, and have weighed the Sin under every Circumstance, and you (meaning Love) have resolved your self in this question, that you Love the person with all your heart, but hate his sin, and your Love is such, that you can, and do greatly sympathize with him, and have been praying for him, and advising with Consideration about him, and have resolved to do all in Love to his Body; but in-

in a moſt eſpecial manner to his precious Soul; no Mother can be more troubled at the fall her Child hath got, and the wound thereby, then you are troubled at this your Brothers fall. Now ſaith *Time*, when ſhall we go and ſpeak with him? we muſt *Time* our undertaking, *for every thing is beautiful in its ſeaſon*; we will take him when moſt alone, and freeſt from any incumbrance of worldly buſineſs, and not chaffed in his mind about any croſs or loſs, affliction or provocation; and if we cannot ſpeed, we will go again, and again, and again; not mattering our *time* ſo we gain the *End* of our *Time*; and having thus timed our work, we will call our next neighbour, whoſe name is MATTER, and that is the Fourth Companion.

Now ſaith Matter we muſt do all by rule, it is that which muſt be our guide; for as many in ſpeaking and acting, as walk according to this rule, *Peace be on them, and God will proſper them*; well then, what Scripture hath he ſinned againſt? What Law hath he broken? How ſhall we do to convince him of this ſin? Theſe are the precepts that he hath broken; and for theſe we muſt call him to *conſideration in Love to day*, and not defer it till another *time*; and when we have had the comfortable fruit of time in this matter with ſucceſs, then we muſt have ſome fit *manner* alſo for Comfort to our fallen Brother by way of promiſe: for our neighbour *Matter* bids us uſe theſe Scriptures if he be *Stubborn*, & theſe Scriptures if he be *Bowed* and fall under his *Sin*.

And now Matter calls his next door Neighbour, whoſe name is MANNER, and he is the fifth Companion who is to go along with the reſt; And now ſaith *Manner*, be ſure you having prayed and weighed his *ſin*, and conſulted with *Love*, with *Time*, *Matter*. Now you muſt uſe a ſuitable way or manner

of speaking; for I have known many a good cause spoyled by ill management, therefore we must keep down *passion*, and speak to him so mildly, that the *Manner* of our speech may not give him occasion to think that our next door Neighbour LOVE was absent: For I once knew an ancient Christian saith *Manner* in his *matter* and *manner* of rebuking a fault, *spoyled* the Cause, and LOST HIS END. For as to the *Matter*, he did use improper or scriptureless expressions; and as for the *Manner* he did not do it with that *gravity* and *seriousness* of Spirit that *Consideration* and *Love* called for; so that the *manner* of our carriage must be such, as that we may not loose our *labour*; and for that reason we will call our next and last door Neighbour, and that is END, who is the Sixth Companion, that is to go along with *Consideration*, *Love*, *Time*, *Matter* and *Manner*

Now saith *End*, What do we propose to our selves in this Enterprise? what is our *End?* Let us examine our heart? truly and throughly Is our *End*, to blemish our Brothers Reputation? Are we glad he is fallen? Are we going now to put him to open shame, and make him the by-word of such as waited for his Halting; if this be our *end*, saith *End*, then let us mourn over our selves, and get into another frame, or else chuse other persons to the work; for if our end be right, it is the *honour of God*, who is dishonoured by this sin, and it is the regaining our Brother by Repentance. Oh! How will it grieve us to hear the adversary say, Aha! Aha! Aha! Aha! So would we have it, and what shall then become of the great name of God? these are *our ends*, and therefore let us proceed to the work, and take all our Neighbours with us, and the good Lord be our good speed, *Amen, Amen.*

Now

Now if Christians will make this way their rule, or the like way of proceeding as much better as they can, I onely in my experience of the dreadful consequences that have attended the contrary, and in my intire affection to a regulation cast in this my poor mite into the Lords treasury; & now shall offer a word of caution, also to the person to whom these neighbours come; and that is, that he would take the same heed, how he entertains this company in their coming to him, as they take in fitting themselves to come to him, that he may acquit himself from being under this dying sign of loving least such plain-dealers. And to this end, I humbly offer my advice; namely, that he would also take heed of *heart-rising*, and put on consideration, and go immediately into his *Closet*, and hear all in *Love*, and think charitably of the guests; and construe their *End* with Charity, that as they have resolved before they came, to do all in *Love*, so he now resolve to *receive* all in *Love*, that when they have delivered their message, they may take their leave with the Apostles words, *We do all things Dearly Beloved for your edification*; and he may return upon them with these words of the Apostle, *Finally, My Brethren Farewell.* Now by this means, occasion will be offered to conclude with thanksgiving to God at their return; and no occasion offered to tempt this Brother to abate in his Love to the person; because of any ill management of the matter, neither will this leave any Room for this dying sign to take place in the Church of God; but will certainly tend to its preventing, or if begun to its speedy removing; *And to these great ends. The blessing of God go along with the Adviser* and *Advised.* Amen.

But I shall briefly speak of two or three Causes of this Decay, which being avoided, may serve as so many Remedies against this dying Sign.

First, A first Cause is, shaking hands again with our old sins, falling in love with what once we loathed; very burthensome to *Israel* was *Moses*, when once they began to grow affected with the Fish, the Cucumbers, and the Mellons, that they had in *Egypt*; not only then good, plain dealing *Moses* comes out of request, but even Gods Manna, though Angels food. *Num.* 11. 5, 6. *We remember the Fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the Cucumbers and the Mellons, and the Leeks, and the Onyons, and Garlick; but now our soul is dryed away, and there is nothing at all besides this Manna before our eyes, and this we lothe as light bread*, Chap. 21.

But Secondly, A second Cause may be this, a losing the relish we once had to heavenly things, *Jer.* 2. 23. *I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals: when thou wentest after me in the Wilderness, in a Land that was not sown; then thou wast holiness to the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase; but now be astonished Oh heavens at this, and be horribly affraid yea very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and hewen out to themselves broken Cisterns that can hold no water. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast left thy first love; Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, or else I will come and remove thy Candlestick except thou repent*, Rev. 2. 11.

Thirdly, A third Cause may be this, a too too much complying with the friendship of this World: which in its latitude is enmity with God, *Gal.* 5. 7. *Ye did run well, who did hinder you*, (or as the margin reads, drive

drive you back) *that you should not obey the truth:* (or hold on your way) *This perswasion comes not of him that calleth you: If any come to me and hate not his Father, and his Mother, Wife, Children, Brothers, Sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my Disciple,* Luke 14. 26. Demas *hath forsaken me, and hath imbraced this present World.* Read and consider.

CHAP. XXI.

Proving the condition of the rich as well as the poor, to be a condition of trouble; and that whether it be common or more then ordinary, to be answerable in prayer; with a description of the different kinds of trouble; with profitable Objections answered; and 4 causes of this decay assigned.

SIGN XXI.

When under more than ordinary trouble, afflictions, or straits, you are not more then ordinary in Prayer.

For the opening of this Sign.

First, what is meant by troubles? It is something that in it self is not, nor cannot be pleasant; But something that oppoſeth and withstandeth the desire and delight of the mind; and therefore in Scripture called a burthen; *Cast thy burthen upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee*; were trouble a matter of pleasure, and profit in it self, there would not be that proper need of prayer, and calling for help from one that is stronger; So that as the word is universal in an ordinary

nary case, it takes in those cares, fears, and sorrows in common, that we are dayly incident to, *Job* 5. 6, 7. *Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward*; That is, it is as natural for man to meet with trouble, as it is for the sparks to fly upward, because there is not that ordinary common condition, but it hath its proper temptation; as I shall instance in this following: for saith the poor man, were I a rich man, how glad, how thankful, how contented should I be? But *Solomon* saith of the rich, *Eccles.* 2. *Who can come after the King?* I got me this and this, *yet all vanity and vexation of Spirit; and there is no profit under the Sun.*

Object. Why no profit?

For these reasons; first, he is very apt to be high minded, and that will dog him, and trouble him; and as it is very hard for the poor to keep the wolf from his door, that is hunger and rags, even so the rich he is in danger of, and involved with trouble, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high minded*; when a high mind in a stately Coach, and a meek Christ on a poor Asses colt meet together, *Herods* Palace, and Christs Manger; It is well now if the high mind do not rather die than stoop, *Exod.* 5. 2. compared with *Dan.* 3. 15. *Who is the* Lord *that I should obey him?* what God *is able to deliver you out of my hand?* Here in their greatness, they challenge God, *James* 5. Do not rich men oppress you, and bring you before Rulers? Is it not their common practice to use their power to oppress you, and as *Solomon* saith, *Prov.* 18. 23. *While the poor useth intreaty, the rich answereth roughly.* Now God is pleased to establish a statute in *Israel* to prevent the evil of high mindedness, which the rich was incident to, *Deut.* 17. 18, 19.

But

But Secondly, The rich hath the trouble of care, as well as the poor, differing only in this, it runneth in another Channel; *For the abundance of the rich, will not ſuffer him to ſleep*; he is ſo beſet with fears of the robber, & cares how to ſecure, as holds his eyes, is as a diſeaſe upon him, *Eccleſ.* 5. 12. It is clear from experience alſo, for ſome rich are ſo beſet with troubles, that they wiſh as a hope of deliverance, that they had been poor; Thus much for the rich. Now the poor hath his troubles alſo, though of a contrary kind, for as the rich are apt to be too high, ſo the poor too low; *Job* 5. 15. *But he ſaveth the poor from the mighty*, that is, from being cruſhed by him, *Pſal.* 113. 7. *He raiſeth the poor out of the duſt*; they are ſo low, that God ſtands for them to uphold them, and keep them, leſt they ſink.

Secondly, As the rich, his abundance will not ſuffer him to ſleep. *Prov.* 10. 15. *So the deſtruction of the poor is his poverty*; that is, it leads him to do that that will deſtroy. *Prov.* 30. 7. *Leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the name of my God in vain*; Hunger, Cold, Fears, Cares, Poverty, and Oppreſſion, that is their portion.

Now all theſe are common troubles, that are incident to every man, but more then ordinary are ſuch as are not ſo common, that do not come every day, but are of ſuch a kind as this, *Pſal.* 50. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*; This day of trouble notes ſomething of ſingularity, as elſe-where the hour of temptation, notes ſomething not ordinary and common; for every man is ſubject to be tempted daily; but this is called hour of tryal, becauſe it is ſome temptation of a ſtrange kind, not ordinary and common, as is evidenced by theſe Scriptures following, *Nehem.* 4. 9. *Nevertheleſs we made our prayer unto*

unto our God, Isa. 37. 11, 12, 13. Luke 6 12. Acts 12. 5. All these Texts plainly shew, that the practice of holy men, in more then ordinary troubles, was to be more then ordinary in prayer.

But it may be Objected, what is meant by ordinary prayer; whether once or twice a day, men ought in ordinary cases to pray.

In Answer to which I shall first premise, that men ought to pray daily in, or under ordinary or common troubles, from these Texts of Scripture, *Mat.* 6. 7, 11. *Give us this day our daily bread*; this day, either intends some particular day in a mans life time, or else every day; that day that we have need of daily bread, or Gods strength and help, is the day here intended; but every body will grant, that every day we have need of daily bread; therefore doubtless, the intent of Jesus Christ here is, that we should pray every day. *Luke* 18. 1, 5. *Men ought always to pray and not to faint, but cry day and night*, Luke 21, 36. Psal. 68. 3. compared with 88. 9. *Hear me O Lord for I cry to thee daily*; By this I hope all good men will conclude, that it is their duty to pray every day.

Object. How often every day in ordinary cases, ought we to pray?

Answ. Where it hath not pleased God by way of precept, to direct to times by way of number, example doubtless may teach us something; *Psal* 55. 17. *Morning, noon, and evening will I pray and cry to God, and he will hear me*; as if *David* should say, my often importuning will be a means of prevailing, *Daniel* 6. 10. *Kneeled down upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed, and praised God as he did aforetime*: clearly proving, it was *Daniels* practice to be in that heavenly service, three times a day; these Scriptures compared

compared with 1 *Thes.* 5. 17. (*Pray without ceasing*) teaching surely, either that Christians ought in ordinary troubles, to be found in prayer three times a day, or at least to be all the day in a praying frame.

Object. 3. But some may say, what if we do not pray at all some dayes, shall we fare the worse?

Answ. First, if you pray not at all, you go out of Gods peoples road, as both precept and example seems to point out; *Give us day by day our daily bread*: seeming to note as well a continuance in the duty of asking, as in the need of receiving, also 1 *Thes.* 5. *Pray continually*: *Nehemiah*, *David*, *Daniel*, and Jesus Christ, by their daily practice seems to construe this precept, to intend daily prayer.

Secondly, not to pray at all, seems to put us out of Gods gracious protection, and so we prove self-betrayers, *Ezek.* 36. 37. *I will yet for all this be inquired of by the house of Israel*, Luke 22. 40. *Pray that you enter not into temptation. If you seek him he will be found of you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you*, 2 Chron. 15. 2.

Thirdly Not to pray at all, seems to put us out of the way of promise of being helped in troubles, *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorifie me*, Psal. 53. *Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.*

Fourthly, Neglect to prayer, tempts God to suffer us to be lead into temptation: *Pour out your hearts before him at all times, God is a refuge for us*: but it is to such as wait upon him by pouring out their wants before him, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Mat. 6. Isai. 64. 5.

What hath been said, may teach two things; First, the lamentable condition of such as neither can, nor will pray, that are as unaccustomed to it, as the Heifer

to

to the yoak; living absolute Atheists in the World, saying in their heart, if not in their actions too, *there is no God: Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen, and families that call not upon thy name.*

Secondly, This teacheth to strengthen the hearts and hands of such as fear God, to this service of prayer, it being part of their defence or Armour, *Ephes.* 6, *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance*, &c. *When thou saidst seek my face, my heart said, thy face Lord will I seek: thou wilt hide me in thy pavilion*, Psal. 27. 4. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Read and consider, so pass to the causes of this Decay.

When under more then, *&c.* But what may be the Causes of this Decay? 1. Ignorance of self-frailty. 2 Ignorance that troubles, or afflictions are Gods frame-house. 3. Ignorance, what an especial help God is in a time of trouble. 4. Ignorance, that prayer to God in trouble, is the very means appointed by God to obtain help from trouble.

First, Ignorance of self-frailty, *Man that is born of a Woman, is of few days and full of trouble.* His frailty saith, that he doth not last long; like the Pitcher sent to the well, and meets with a fall which breaketh it all to pieces, and it becometh useful no more; the holy Spirit in this Text gives us to understand the state of Man, he is Born of a Woman, and that is Argument enough to prove his frailty, that as such he shall Hunger, and Thirst, and be full of Infirmities and Sicknesses, Dying till he Dye: This is witnessed every day; did we not shut our eyes from it? whither can we go to City or Country, and not meet with frail man, under the Burden either of *Consumption, Stone, Chollick, Burning-Feaver, Tertian-ague, Timpany, Dropsie, Scurvy, Griping, Gout*, &c.

May

May not our dayly experience tell us this? Are we not Ebbing or Flowing continually? If at morning Joyous, at evening in Heavyneſs; our ſtate not only troubled in common, but our daily accidents ſhooting as it were new Arrows of *greater trouble* at us, till we come to fulfill tha' doleful cry in the Morning, to ſay, would God it were Evening, and at Evening to ſay, would God it were Morning, *Deut.* 28. 67. No place of reſt for the ſole of the Foot. Doth not LONDONS houſes of Hoſpitality witneſs this every day? May we not go thither and find Captives creeping to DEATH, as it were looking gaſtly, weeping bitterly, with this Sequel; *Oh that my Days were at an end, and my Nights no more!* Mortals look but round you, and behold your frailty, here lies one full of groanings, waiting to be cut for the Stone, here lies another to have a gangrenned Leg or Arm Sawn off, here lies another eaten up with the Kings-Evil, here lies another eaten up of the Cancer; In a word, we may conclude with the words of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. 1. 6. *From the Sole of the Foot, even unto the head, there is no ſoundneſs in it, but wounds and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.*

Doth not this beſpeak us full of Trouble? No ſooner is one ſtorm gone, but another comes; and doth not this call upon us to be in Prayer continually; and is it not a certain argument of great decay in Godlineſs, when ignorance of Self-frailty is great? Let us awake with *David*, to *David's* prayer, *Pſa.* 39. 4. *Lord make me to know mine end, and the meaſure of my days* what it is, that I may know how FRAIL I am, plainly noting this as an eſſential means, not only to put *David* upon the work of Prayer, but fervent perſeverance in the ſame.

But

But *Secondly*, A ſecond cauſe may be this, Ignorance that troubles, or afflictions are Gods Frame-houſe; He there puts us to prove us, that he may bowe us, long abſence from Health is uſually attended with ſpiritual Wealth. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now I have learned thy Precepts*; till this time I knew not my Self, I did not conſider my Frailty, nor thought Health ſo great a Jewel as now I ſee it is, when *Iſrael* had reſt from trouble, they grew ſetled upon their Lees: Idleneſs brought them to Wantonneſs, and being fed to the full with Butter of Kine, and Milk of Sheep, with the fat of Lambs and Rams of the breed of *Baſhan*, and there drink the pure wine of the Grape: *Then* Jeſurum *waxed fat and kicked, then he forſook God that made him; and lightly eſteemed the rock of his Salvation*; a ſad effect did attend his fulneſs.

Now in mercy comes trouble to file off this Ruſt, or elſe it will deſtroy and eat out like a Cancker.

All that relliſh, ſenſe and habit that once was in *Iſrael*, in the day when God found him in a deſert Land, and in the waſt howling Wilderneſs; then he was holineſs to the Lord, ſtooped with his Heart, and Bowed with his Neck; Lord help and ſave me, and whatſoever thou commandeſt I will do, and whitherſoever thou ſendeſt me I will go. Where afflictions meet not with a reprobate mind, or one void of Judgment; this is the very effects of Trouble. *Iſa.* 26. 16. *Lord in trouble have they viſited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy Chaſtening was upon them*: they were early with God when they felt the ſmart of the Rod. So that in brief, this may teach us that Troubles are Gods Frame-houſe, and Ignorance of it an evident ſign of decay in Godlineſs.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, A third Cauſe of this decay may be this, Ignorance, What an eſpecial help God is in time of trouble, He alone brings it, and He alone Sanctifies it, and He alone removes it; Its Gods Love to afflict, He gave *Iſrael* into the hands of their enemies, becauſe they ſoon forgat his works, and waited not for his Counſel, ſo they that hated them ruled over them, nevertheleſs he regarded their Affliction and made them to be Pityed of all thoſe that carryed them Captive. *Afflictions doth not come out of the Duſt, neither doth troubles ſpring out of the Ground*; God is a gracious Agent in the whole courſe of a mans Pilgrimage, and ſo eſſentially our towre in times of trouble, that we can no way bear it or improve it without him; *David* was well skilled in this bleſſed Arithmetick; whatſoever others may think of Gods being a Cauſe or Cure of ſuch as are in trouble; *I know O Lord that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulneſs haſt afflicted me*, Pſal. 119. 75. Thou Lord art he that both ſaveth from Trouble, and ſaveth in Trouble; this is thy teſtimony given of thy great Majeſty, *Deut.* 32. 39. *See now that I even I am he, and there is no God with me*; I *kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal*: *neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.* Ignorance of this is a great let to ſpiritual growth, and a great cauſe why Gods Altar in time of trouble is ſo little viſited.

But *Fourthly*, A Fourth cauſe of this decay, namely, That when under more then ordinary Troubles, we are not more then ordinary in Prayer, may be this, Ignorance that prayer to God in trouble is the very means appointed by God to obtain help from trouble; Prayer is a Chriſtians HANDS, It is his working Tools, without which he cannot do any great exploit. Give any Artiſt never ſo much room and time to do

ſome excellent piece of work, yet deny him Tools; and it will prove like the *Egyptian* Task-maſters, no Straw, no Brick; as Food and Cloathing is the means of natural Health, ſo Prayer mixed with Trouble is the means of ſpiritual health, without which neither can ſtand. The Ax heweth the Timber, the Hammer forceth the Nail, the Lime and Morter fixeth the Brick, and the Hands of the cunning Work-men buildeth the Houſe, and prepareth againſt the ſtorms a ſuitable habitation; thus Prayer is a Chriſtians hands, without which he cannot hold God; Let me alone *Moſes*, do not by Prayer hold my hands from doing ſome great Execution upon Rebellious *Iſrael*: *I will not let thee go* (ſaith good *Jacob*) till thou bleſs me. I will not ceaſe praying till I find God coming by faith, always to pray and not faint; Is the way or Channel through which I muſt expect the promiſe, NO PRAYER *NO PROMISE*; no ſeeking, no finding: if I Ceaſe to call in trouble, God will Ceaſe to anſwer in trouble; *I have ſet Watch-men upon thy Walls O Jeruſalem, which ſhall never hold their peace day nor night*: Mark that I beſeech you, *day nor night*. You that make mention of the Lord, Keep not Silence and give him no reſt, that is, ceaſe not praying till the accompliſhing the promiſe, till he eſtabliſh, and till he make *Jeruſalem* a praiſe in the Earth: moſt pertinent to this, is that bleſſed word in *Ezekiel* 36. 36. *I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was deſolate; I the Lord have ſpoken it, and I will do it*. Here is a great and gracious promiſe that the Land that was deſolate, ſhall be as the garden of *Eden*, and the Cities that lay waſt ſhall be fenced and inhabited, (but pray mark how) *verſe* 37. *Yet for all this, I will be enquired after by the houſe of* Iſrael *to do it for them*, they ſhall pray unto me, MY PRO-

PROMISE to do it, is so far from being a ground to cease Prayer, that it is the very FOUNDATION OF PRAYER, they must pray for it, because God hath promised to do it; A lively example for this have we upon record in 2 *Sam.* 7. 27. *For thou O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee a house, therefore hath thy Servant found in his heart to pray this prayer,* verse 25. *And now O Lord God the* WORD THAT THOU HAST SPOKEN (or promised) *concerning thy Servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.* Here it is plain that *David* was so far from presuming upon the promise to cease from the duty of prayer, that it is his very Argument that he uses in prayer, that what God had promised he would be intreated to perform; The good Lord help us to consider this, and so I shall pass to the 22*d.* Sign of dying in Godlyness.

CHAP. XXII.

Containing in it an Assertion of the Causes of Affliction; and that without great provocation God is not wont to afflict his people; and though provoked, very unwilling to extremity: With four Objections that seem to complain against this Doctrine, Answered.

SIGN. XXII.

When you are mighty careless to Inquire after the spiritual cause of Affliction, and mighty careful to Inquire after the natural cure of Affliction.

The more or less spiritual any man is, may be easily discovered under this Tryal; Affliction being of that piercing kind, that other tryals are not, because of the great influence it hath upon the Sensitive part of man, where ever it comes, while sense remains, it makes the person restless, either to find out Cause, or Cure, or both. We may therefore first inquire after the word Affliction, what that meaneth to afflict, is to lay some burthen upon a person, that is not ordinary, *Gen.* 15. 13. *There they shall afflict you four hundred years:* this is opened in Exod. 1. *Israel is made to serve with rigour.* Lam. 1. 4, 5. *The wayes of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate, her Priests sigh, her Virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which are in* Egypt, *by reason of his task-masters,* Acts 3. 34. By these Texts it appears, that affliction meaneth any grief

grief or trouble that cometh upon ſoul or body, name or eſtate, for the puniſhment of ſin, or the tryal of faith; ſo that ſickneſſes and diſeaſes, as Feaver, and Ague, Conſumption, Inflamation and the like, are all compriſed under this word Affliction; It will therefore be neceſſary to open the word Spiritual cauſe, it being in the Sign oppoſed to natural cure: by ſpiritual cauſe is to be underſtood, ſome provoking God in the ſubject afflicted, to the procuring this affliction, noting ſome cauſe or other, why the Spirit ſuffers it to come upon us.

Now every body will be ready to grant, that theſe things before premiſed, may be truly called affliction, but not grant that there can be ſuch a ſpiritual cauſe in themſelves, and ſo make the Sign of no force.

Now to clear up this doubt, let us make this inquiry, whether any affliction, or death it ſelf, come upon any man, but for ſome cauſe or other from the man, (active or imputative) that is, he either ſo acted in his particular perſon, or ſome body elſe in his general relation, and on him it is righteouſly come: For the reſolution of this queſtion, let us inquire what cauſes in Scripture the righteous God aſſigns afflictions or death unto, *Gen.* 3. 9 10, 11, 12, 13. *Who told thee thou wert naked? Haſt thou eaten of the Tree I commanded thee not to eat:* The things in this Chapter conſiderable are theſe, *verſe* 14. *the Serpent muſt go upon his belly, eat duſt, and be curſt above every beaſt of the field, verſe* 16. *to the woman he ſaith, I will greatly multiply thy ſorrow, and thy conception; in ſorrow thou ſhalt bring forth children: and to* Adam *he ſaith, Curſed is the ground for thy ſake, Thorns. and Thiſtles it ſhall bring forth to thee; duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt return*; you ſee in theſe verſes, miſery both upon the woman and the man, is brought

and the reaſon by God aſſigned. *verſe* 17. Becauſe thou *haſt done this in hearkning to thy wife, curſed is the ground for thy ſake*: ſo alſo *Joſh.* 7. 7. *Iſrael*, Gods prevailing people, that by day had a pillar of a cloud, and by night a pillar of fire miniſtring unto them, now cannot ſtand before their enemies; *Joſhua* that at another time commands the Sun, and Moon, and they obey him; now by prayer cannot prevail, for *Iſrael* Gods people, againſt the curſed Nation; But what is the matter? *verſe* 11, 12. *Iſrael hath ſinned and cannot ſtand, neither will I be with them any more, except they put the accurſed thing from among them* Lam. 3. 1, 15. *I am the man that have ſeen affliction*, verſe 39 *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſin?* 1 Cor. 11. 3. *For this Cauſe many are ſick and weak, and many ſleep.* 1 Theſ. 2. 11. *For this Cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they all might be damned that believed not the truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs*: and let all the houſe of *Iſrael* know, *that without a Cauſe, I have not done all that I have done, ſaith the Lord*, Ezek. 14. 23. Much more might be ſaid, as to afflictions that attend both the body and mind; together with the Cauſes: and this left to conſideration.

Whether if Hell, Condemnation, the higheſt of Affliction, be the fruit or reward of ſin and unbelief: much rather ſickneſs, and diſeaſes with death it ſelf which are the leaſt afflictions, muſt come from Creature Cauſes: Now if any man can aſſign any other Cauſe then God doth here aſſign, let him do it; if not by all this comparing of it with the eighth Sign of dying to Chriſt, in which I have been more large upon affliction, inward and outward, with their Cauſes; I ſhall therefore proceed to ſome Objections

jections, that seem to complain against this Doctrine.

Object. 1. The first Objection is grounded upon, 2 *Sam* 12. 14. *The Child that is born to thee shall surely dye: David* is threatned with death in the child that hath not offended, contrary to this Doctrine.

Answ. This act of God to take away *David's* Child, if considered, will be found mercy mixt with justice, *David* by the Law was to die for the matter of *Uriah*; now God in respect he bare to *David* for what good he had done, and further was like to do, being a man so after Gods own heart, goes out of the ordinary way, spares the person of *David*, and imputes it upon the relation of *David*, *viz.* his Child; so in *Davids* seed he punished *Davids* person; This is Gods usual way in Scripture, and sets His Majesty out, to be full of Mercy in the midst of Justice, he will take away the first born in *Egypt*, that had not sinned, and therein plagued *Pharoah*, and their Fathers that had sinned: That this is mercy, consider if *David* the sinner be cut off for his sin; there was then no room left to manifest repentance either in *David* or the *Egyptians*, yet death must come that God may be just; and though nothing but Justice must take place, yet in that he will be as merciful as possible to stand with Justice; Therefore there is truly a Cause, for God to impute death to *Davids* Child, for *Davids* sin.

Object. 2. The second Objection is grounded upon *Job* 2. 3. which seems also to complain against this Doctrine in these words; *Thou hast moved me against* Job *without a Cause, he is a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and hateth evil,*

Answ. God goeth in this out of his ordinary way, as in the case of St. *Pauls* conversion, *Acts* 9. It will not be safe to imagine, that others are unconverted because God meets not others so, sometime God doth things to shew his Power and Majesty, and greatness over all, and his using instruments in an extraordinary case, as his raising *Lazarus* from the grave, and from death the widows Son, and others, is no warrant for us to allude to cases ordinary.

Secondly, Here was a cause if not in *Job*, and indeed necessity that this should come upon him, if we consider, *Chap.* 1. 9. *There is none like Job*, saith God; *doth he serve thee for nought?* saith Satan, *put but forth thy hand, and he will curse thee to thy face.* Now that *Job* did not serve God just because God had dealt so well with him, but would do it if God dealt other ways with him, shall now appear, and the accuser of the brethren be put to the worst, who complains against *Job*, as envying his prosperity.

Thirdly, In the strictest sense this carriage of God to *Job*, can hardly be termed affliction, but rather some gracious condition by God made with *Job* to this purpose; *Job* thou art an upright man, thou feareſt me, and hatest evil, and Satan is still complaining of thee, because he envies thy prosperity, and tells me thou wouldst prove another man, then I take thee to be, if I should try thee by adversity, and take from thee thy prosperity Now lets stop the mouth of this great adversary, & lend me thy Oxen, and thy Asses, thy servants and thy Camels, thy Children and all thy substance, and thy body for my service, I will pay thee with great advantage, as appears by this following: *So the Lord blessed the latter end of* Job *more then his beginning, for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand Camels, and a thousand yoak of Oxen, and a thousand shee Asses, and had*

also

also seven sons and three daughters; so that the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Job 42. 10, 11, 12.

Object. 3. The third Objection is grounded upon *Isa.* 57. 1. *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart:* Good men here are taken away by death, and no cause shewed; they have the testimony of good men, and yet taken away: It will be granted, they might have lived much longer for age, the Text implies it, and the Objection is the stronger by it; for it would be no matter of complaint, had they lived till very age had took them away, for then we know all must dye.

Answ. The time these good men lived in, was a very evil time, and God takes them away.

First, In judgment to the People.

Secondly, In mercy to themselves.

First, In Judgment, *Isa.* 5. 6, 7, 10, 11, 12. He hath called upon them by the Righteous, and warned them, but it would do them no good; now he will take away the Righteous from them, to see if they will lay it to heart.

Secondly, In mercy to themselves, they are taken away.

First, Because by long living with such, they must needs be a weary even of their lives, and their souls vexed from day to day. *Psal.* 120. 5. *Wo is me that I dwell in the Tents of* Kedar. So Jer. 4. 14 *My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart, my heart maketh a noise within me, because thou hast heard in* Jerusalem *the sound of the Trumpet, the Alarm of war.*

Secondly, In mercy to them, because the continuance of this temptation upon them, may at last so weary them out, as they may give up all as *Solomon* did. 1 *Kings* 11. 4. *When he was old, his Wives turned away his heart after other gods.* So Mat. 24. 21, 22. *Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the be-*

beginning of the world, nor ever shall be; except those days shall be shortned, there could no flesh be saved; but for the elects sake, it shall be shortned: Even as our Proverb is, A continual dropping will wear a hole in the stone: so a continual oppression may turn the wise man out of all; see for this, *Jer.* 20. 14, &c. He curseth the day of his birth, and the man that brought tidings to his Father, wished his Mother had been always great with him, saying, *wherefore came I forth out of the womb, to see labour and sorrow, and that my days should be consumed with shame?* Clearly noting, that any zealous heart, is sorely touched, when all he can do will not keep God from dishonour; *O blot me* (saith Moses) *out of thy book*; By this it may appear, that Gods afflicting men, is for some cause or other in them.

Object. 4, Fourthly, Another Scipture that seems to complain by way of Objection is, *John* 9. 1, 2, 3. in these words; *Who did sin this man or his Father, that he is born blind?*

For answer to which Christ saith, *Neither this man nor his Father, but that the power of God might appear*; yet it is clear, the Disciples understood this affliction in common must come for sin; and Jesus Christ in his reply, notes the case more than common, saying, *He was born for this purpose, that the work of God should be manifested in him*; it was mercy he was born, and he was born that a wonder of Heaven might be shewed upon him; therefore we must distinguish between a case that is extraordinary, and one that is common.

Again, from the unwillingness that is in God to afflict; as a confirming answer to all the Objections, it appears, that high provocations in us, procure Afflictions to us; for till Justice calls so loud, that God cannot be just except he doth afflict, though in compassion

passion he mixeth all with abundance of mercy, 2 Chron. 36. 15, 16. *The Lord God of their Fathers sent to them by his Prophets, rising up betimes and sending them, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place*: That is, he was very pitiful, loth to grieve or afflict them, till there was no remedy. Justice called so long and loud for vengeance upon them, as *Psal.* 106. 34. *They did not destroy the Nations, but were mingled among them, and learned their works, and served their Idols; therefore was Gods wrath kindled, insomuch that he abhorred his Inheritance. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry, and did pity them.* Hosea 6 4. compared with *Chap.* 11. 7, 8. *How shall I give thee up? what shall I do to thee?* What else doth all this signifie then thus much? that though God be so provoked, that nothing but Judgment must come, yet like a tender Father to an unruly Child, mourns over him, while he corrects him. We shall leave what hath been said to consideration, and pass to the Twenty third Sign of dying to Christ.

CHAP. XXIII.

Proving those Christians under great Decay, that pray more in Affliction to have it removed, then sanctified; with three Causes of this Decay.

SIGN XXIII.

When you pray more for Afflictions being removed, then sanctified.

That is, not only mindless of Afflictions Cause, but indeed mindless of Afflictions end; it is easie and ordinary

dinary for persons under Affliction to be brought to their knees to prayer; not only good men, but bad men in affliction will be ready to cry for help, *In their affliction they will seek me early.* Hos. 5. 15. That is one of their first works, then they will mind to be doing, till then God is forgotten, they having lost much their spiritual feeling; but now being touched in their outward senses, they will cry for relief. Then wicked *Pharaoh*, that in *Exod.* 5. 2. could say, *Who is the Lord that I should obey his voyce, to let* Israel *go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let* Israel *go*; in Chap. 8. 8. When his Land was full of Frogs, cries to *Moses* to *pray to this God for him*, he had but little before disdained: See that known Text for this, *Jonah* 1. 5. *Then every man,* (that is, when they was in affliction) *cries to his God*; the tempest being great, and they all like to perish, not only cries to their God, but with a high hand saith to Jonah, *What meanest thou O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God, that we perish not.* So 2 Chron. 33. 12. *Manasseh when he was in affliction, sought the Lord his God*: By all which compared, it is very usual both with good and bad men in affliction, to be early at prayer to God.

Now Affliction you know, we have in the last Sign proved, is Gods Furnace to try the Nature of every Mettal by; so that you may truly pass judgment upon your selves, whether or no you are of the dying hand; not by your praying, here you may deceive your selves, though you pray mightily, for it is easie to do so in Affliction; but if you pray more for Afflictions being *removed, then sanctified*; that is, put up strong cries to be eased of the trouble, but scarce possest with faint wishes to answer Gods design in the trouble; never inquiring, *What have I done?* or saying, I must be more humble, more thankful, more pittiful,

pittiful, more fearful, more careful all my days. What shall I do, saith the zealous man, to get good by this Affliction? his voyce cryes louder for spiritual advantage, then his pain for natural freedom. Let us think of this, and deal plainly with our own hearts, and see what way the pulse beats most; for as the staff you set up, will fall one way or other; so persons being more or less spiritual, will easily discover it in Affliction. *Israel* of old might be read in this, and you know how God dealt with them, of six hundred thousand, there was but two, namely, *Joshua* and *Caleb*, that entred the good land of promise; they early begun to show how carnal they were. *Exod.* 12. 13, 14. When they enjoyed their great deliverance from *Egypts* bondage, *Chap.* 15. *Then sang they Gods praise*; but being put into some strait, they murmur presently, and wish to God they had dyed in the Land of *Egypt*, as *Psal.* 106. shews at large, where we may read of Gods dealings with them at large, and their dealings with God: while they had what they wanted, they were pleased and liked the Lord should be their God; but (when though for their own good) they were straitned, and did miss their wonted fulness, then they lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. *verse* 14. We do not read it was upon their hearts to make any spiritual use or advantage of Gods different dealings with them; when they had not what they would have, instead of learning to cease to murmur, they strengthened themselves in murmuring against the Lord, who was graciously careful for them, and suffered not any more straits to befall them, then what was in order to their truest good; although they were, as many now are, full of complaints, yet their greatest want was slackness to those strong cries that ought to be found in

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Christians, for a sanctified use of whatsoever doth befall them, taking care to the one thing needful, *without which all Order, is Disorder; all Mercies, Miseries, all Blessings, but Cursings*; What shall it profit a man, whatsoever he hath of fulness or scarcity; health or sickness; desire, or want of desire, if Gods end in all, and our happiness in all, be not gotten? to wit, that *eternal Salvation* that freeth from everlasting *Damnation*, that being the great work that all other works ought and must give way unto: But I shall proceed to the Causes, why persons pray more to have Afflictions removed, then sanctified,

First, Ignorance of the Cause of Affliction.

Secondly, Ignorance of the Necessity of Affliction.

Thirdly, Ignorance of the End of Affliction.

First, Ignorance of the Cause of Affliction; No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous, bitter and sharp, having with it an unpleasant tast to whomsoever it comes; therefore in it self certainly not welcome to any, although they bring it upon themselves; Who is it that runs not from pain naturally, and will part with what is outwardly dear to them, rather then expose themselves to that torturing that attends some kind of Affliction? Now if as plainly and as certainly it appear, there is unwillingness as well in God to Afflict, as there is in the creature to chuse Affliction; then it will naturally follow, that there is a Cause, Ignorance of which is a main reason, why we pray more to have it removed, then sanctified.

For the proof of this, that there is as great unwillingness in God, from whom Affliction comes, to give it, as we to receive it: mind a little some texts of Scripture. 1 *Pet.* 3. 8. *And who is he that will harm*

you,

you, if ye be followers of that which is good? in the words going before you have it thus written, *But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil:* That is, his favourable countenance is set against such, and their portion is bitterness. *Levit.* 26. 17. *But if ye be followers of that which is good, who will harm you?* Here seems to be a holy challenge, to whatsoever may harm us; as if the Spirit should have said, What indeed can harm you, if God be for you? and God will not be against you, if you are followers of that which is good; *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, to crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth.* Lam. 3. 33, 34. *Wherefore then* may it be said, *Doth the living man complain?* the holy Spirit gives the answer; *For the punishment of his sin. The joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned into mourning; the Crown is fallen from off our head, wo unto us for we have sinned,* Lam. 15. 16. A multitude of Scriptures might be further urged further to prove both unwillingness in God to Afflict, and that the very Cause of all our Wo both temporal and eternal, is our misdoing; *O that my people had hearkned to my voyce, and walked in my ways, I should have soon subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.* Psal 81. 13, 14. Now in reason were the Cause of Affliction considered to be only from our selves procured by our misdoing, and sent with tendency to our mending, we should surely pray more to have it sanctified, then removed.

Secondly, Ignorance of the Necessity of Affliction, is a Cause of this Decay; the very unwillingness of God to bring it, and the creature to indure it; fully proves, that there is Necessity for it; there cannot be more undelightfulness in the creature to undergo languishing, then there is in God to put him under languishing.

guiſhing. *How ſhall I give thee up O Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee O Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as* Adma? *How ſhall I ſet thee as* Zeboim? *My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.* Hoſ. 11. 8. *When he was come near, and beheld the City, he wept over it,* Luke 19. 41. Now Gods unwillingneſs, proves the creature cannot live at any ſpiritual rate without it; and indeed Experience proves the ſame, *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now I have kept thy word.* Pſal. 119. 67. *David* wandred from the Fold, and was like to continue till Affliction ſpoke to him, he forgot himſelf and what he was a doing, *The wicked,* ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; therefore pride compaſſeth them about as a Chain, violence covereth them as a garment;* and what uſe do they make of it? *they ſay how doth God know, and is there knowledge in the moſt High?* This clearly notes, that a condition freeſt from trouble or affliction, generally is attended with carnalleſt behaviour Godward, *When I had fed them to the full, they then committed Adultery, and aſſembled by troups into Harlots houſes.* Jer. 5. 7. By all this it appears, that it is from ignorance of Afflictions neceſſity, if we pray more to have it removed then ſanctified.

Thirdly, Ignorance of the End of Affliction, is a Cauſe of this Decay; now the Cauſe being Sin, and the Neceſſity being to humble; the End is to ſave. Now all Gods dealings are mercy, whatſoever he doth to the creature, is like himſelf, and in its ſelf is mercy. if he give us all we deſire and would have, it is Mercy; if he keep us without it, it is Mercy; Health from him is Mercy, ſo is Sickneſs; Plenty from him is Mercy, ſo is Poverty: Health, Life, Strength, and ſuch like Favours temporal, every body will acknowledge

knowledge to be Mercy; but their contrary few or none will account Mercy, yet this is Mercy also, for this Checquer work the World is made of, some at the same time are wringing their hands for sorrow, while others are clapping their hands for joy; some with straits, through Sickness and Poverty are Weeping, others through Health and Plenty, rejoycing: Now the great difficulty is, how to bring the heart to look upon the state of Weeping as truly Mercy, as the state of Rejoycing: For which end consider, why we do account Health, Plenty, and such like Injoyments Mercy, but because they have in them an esteeming and desirable good, a seasonable and suitable good; it is the same with the contrary, they are as seasonable and as suitable, could our frail hearts so receive them, for they are as truly from the Lord as the other, and as truly have the same end in them. There are two great Ends in all God doth; one is his Honour, the other is our Salvation. Now if God give us what we would have, his End is the same; and if he give us the contrary, his End is is the same; and Christians certainly misconstruing his End to be Mercy, is the Cause they misconstrue his Actions to be Mercy, that both are Mercy, read *Exod.* 13. 17. *There God led them through the wilderness*, an unbeaten way, *where they wanted both bread and water*; and yet both End and Action Mercy to bring them to *Canaan*, and deliver them from harm by the *Philistines*; *Remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these fourty years, through that great and terrible Wilderness, wherein was fiery Serpents, and Scorpions, and Drought and no Water, that he might humble thee, and prove thee to do thee good at thy latter end.* It is too evident, that *Israel* construed this [hard dealing from God] but it was great Mercy as the text fully proves. Ignorance therefore of the End

of Affliction, is a Cause why we pray more to have it Removed then Sanctified.

CHAP. XXIV.

Containing in it six Seasons, in which Christians ought to humble themselves by fasting; proving those under great decay, that in times of calamity can find no necessity for fasting.

SIGN XXIV.

When under Gods Calamity, you can neither find necessity, nor excellency, to humble your selves by fasting and prayer.

As prayer rightly put up to God, is a way and means by which he many times is prevailed with, both to remove judgments and sanctifie them; even so fasting is Gods way, in which he hath often been found. and it is the more prevailing with him, insomuch as it hath in it a gracious tendency to abase and humble the soul, and make it more to fit to receive the kind impression of his precepts, in opening of his promises, together with the reverencing him because of his threatnings, it being a season not only of laying the soul low in its own eyes, at the sensible sight of his own vileness, but a marvellous exalting the gracious and long forbearance of God, forcing the heart to cry out, what manner of love is this that we should be called the Children of God? Who was before wallowers in the works of darkness, that leads to the Chambers of death, but now by his grace, though once far off, made nigh, of an Alien made a home-dweller; All these things are brought to remembrance, very fresh in fasting Seasons, that being a time of calling to mind things

things past; and though calamity be as truly Gods mercy, as the contrary, having in it the same design of Salvation-good; yet it is more properly sent in order to reducing from those strayings it finds such persons in, as it comes upon, and because of the smart and unpleasant taste it brings with it, calls them with a louder voyce to make inquiry, why am I thus? Which prosperity in all probability could never have so done, being not so much of that piercing kind, to the external senses, as adversity or calamity is; and this the Prophet. *Isa.* 26. 16. seems to make his great observation in these words, *Lord in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them: For I will be unto* Ephraim *as a Lion, and as a young Lion unto the House of* Judah: *I even I, will tear and go away, and return to my place till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.* Hos. 5. 14, 15. Plainly implying, that it is not only the design of God to send calamity upon persons for this end, but that also that they are most aptly provoked to it at this Season; see that remarkable text for this: 2 *Chron.* 33. 10, 11, 12. *And the Lord spake to Manasseh and his people, but they would not hearken; wherefore that he might speak by this rod, as well as his word; the Lord brought upon him the Captain of the Host, the King of* Assyria, *which took* Manasseh *among the Thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to* Babylon; *and when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly.* While the rod was but shaken as it were, *Manasseh* remained refractory, but when he was bound in chains, he humbled himself greatly. Must it not then from hence needs follow, that calamity calls for fasting and humbling wherever it comes, being designed to that reduce-

ing end. And may not the decay of ſome grow to that paſs, even ſo ripe for reaping, that except they ſhould from a deep ſenſe of their ſtate, be mightily brought down to humble their ſouls with faſting, as the laſt remedy left or prepared by God, for ſuch conditions to betake themſelves unto; and that if they here ſhould fail, then to be given up to the mouth of ruine. *Hear this ye old men, give ear all ye inhabitants of the Land, hath this been in your days or even in the days of your Fathers; tell ye your Children of it, and let your Children tell their Children, and their Children another generation: that which the Palmer worm hath left, hath the locuſt eaten, and that which the locuſt hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten, and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpiller eaten; ſanctifie ye a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly, gather the Elders, and all the inhabitants of the Land, into the Houſe of the Lord their God, and cry, alas, alas, for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as deſtruction from the Almighty ſhall it come.* How evident is it that this was this peoples laſt remedy, and except they now find mercy, nothing but deſtruction will be their portion?

But ſome may Object and ſay, how ſhall we know when danger is ſuch, that without humbling our ſelves with faſting joyned to prayer, we are like to meet with ruin?

Anſw. There are ſix ſeaſons that of neceſſity calls for Faſting with prayer.

Firſt, when long patience is abuſed.
Secondly, when juſt judgments are threatned.
Thirdly, when juſt judgments are executed.
Fourthly, when iniquity in Churches gets a head.
Fifthly, when Churches grows ſecure.

Sixthly,

Sixthly, when some great thing is by them to be obtained.

First, when long patience is abused; patience or forbearance in God, is long exercised to both Churches and people, before with judgment he sweeps them away, the rod is shaken again and again, while they are under visible decay, and though God wait long upon such as grows luke-warm in all their active graces, yet will he at last speak home to them; it was thus with *Israel* after they had rested from their troubles, they did evil again and again, for which God did gently whip them; then they turned for a while, and cryed, but presently after, went to their old course, *Yet many years did he forbear them, and testified against them, by his Spirit in his Prophets, yet would they not hear, therefore gave he them up into the hand of the people of the Land.* Nehem. 9. 30. So in *Jeremiahs* time, they provoked Gods patience long, *So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of their doings; clearly noteing, that they had long* abused his long forbearance, *therefore was their land made desolate.* But,

Secondly, when just judgments are threatned, when God hath waited long upon his People or a Nation, and called that way for reformation; but it will not do, he is wont still in mercy for their true good to walk in another Method, and that is to shake his Rod, or threaten them what he will do, exrept they repent.

The old World did provoke God long, and he warned them Fourty years together while the Ark was preparing, and threatned them all that time with a deluge of Water to destroy them, on purpose for their reclaiming; though he knew what *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* had done, yet he would inquire whether it were

according to the cry: For the Honour of all his bleſſed Attributes; he will not kill before he Judge; he will not bring the Rod, before he give warning of the Rod; and if the warning take us in the caſe of *Nineveh*, yet fourty days and it ſhall be deſtroyed; this was *Jonahs* Commiſſion, and he muſt go through all the ſtreets, and proclaim it: a Judgment is coming, but yet *Mercy pleads for fourty days reſpitt*, to conſider whether they will Repent and turn, or be Deſtroyed; and though many times becauſe Sentence is not ſpeedily Executed. The hearts of the Sons of Men are bent to do wickedly; yet *Nineveh* repents, and the Judgment is prevented: *For they believed God, and proclaimed a Faſt; and put on ſack-cloth from the greateſt to the leaſt: and God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil he ſaid he would do unto them, and did it not.* Chap. 2. 5, 10. This was Gods very Method to thoſe decaying Churches in *Aſia*, he ſent his Angel to tell them he had knowledge of their works, he commended what was good, and blamed what was bad, and called for reformation, elſe threatned them, that in Juſtice he would unchurch them, except they *Repent*.

Never was Nation, City, Church or Family deſtroyed by God *without Warning*, and *patient Waiting*; not only to teach us to walk in Gods Method in all our ſubordinate affairs, Superiours to Inferiours, Judges to Malefactors, but alſo to exalt Judgment and Juſtice in God, to the acknowledging as *David* did, *Pſal.* 51. 4. This is done, *that thou mighteſt be juſtified when thou ſpeakeſt, and clear when thou judgeſt*; ſhall not (ſaith Father *Abraham*) the Judge of all the Earth do righteouſly.

But Secondly, It is a ſeaſon that calls for of neceſſity, ſelf-humbling by prayer with faſting, when juſt judgments are executed, *&c.* Thirdly,

Thirdly, when just judgments are executed, is a season for fasting joyned with prayer, that they may be again removed; *Then Hanani said, the remnant which are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproch, the wall of* Jerusalem *is broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire: and it came to pass when I heard these words, I sate down and wept, and mourned certain days, and* Fasted *and prayed before the God* of Heaven, *Nehem.* 1. 3,4. This way good *Nehemiah* took, and it was prosperous with the Lord.

Fourthly, when iniquity gets head, that is, when sin and sinners in Churches, grows so numerous and heady, that they are like to out-voyce the better party, it is high time then to be night and day with the Lord in fasting and prayer, that iniquities head may be broken, by the sword of his mouth; there was a few names, and it was but a few in *Sardis* Church, that had not defiled their garments, the greatest part were readie to die, and the Lord threatens to unchurch them except they repent. *Rev.* 3. *And now you call the proud happy, yea, they that work wickedness are set up, and they that tempt God are even delivered: then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another.* Mat. 3. 15, 16.

Fifthly, when Churches grow secure; that is, as safely sheltered in their account from iudgment, though a dying to every duty, as if they were in a growing, flourishing state, contenting themselves to be told it is not well with them, but sit still from using either means of information or recovery, as though they were minded to suffer their distemper to grow mortal; *Thou saist I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.*

ked. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: Be zealous therefore and repent. Rev. 3. 17, 19.

But Sixthly and Lastly, when some great things are by them to be obtained, or great judgments executed; and the cause is not fully discovered, there is no getting cure till we know the Cause, nor no knowing the Cause but by Prayer and Fasting; It is Gods usual Method when he hath some great blessing to bring upon a Nation or People, to set it upon their Hearts long before, to be in a burning zealous frame of Prayer; for the hastening of such a blessing. And on the contrary, it is very observable in experience, that when judgments are a coming upon a Peop'e, Family or Person, there is certainly a great stupidity in them, and great degrees of security in them, bespeaking *health and happyness, when wo and anguish is at the door.* For when they shall say PEACE AND SAFETY to themselves then SUDDEN DESTRUCTION cometh upon them, as Travail upon a Woman, from which they shall not escape. *1 Thes.* 5. 3. The old World preached Peace all the while the Ark was making, though every Hammer and Nail preached War; and in their Security, Eat, Drank, Bought, Sold, Builded, Planted, or gave up themselves to all these, not minding till the Flood came and took them all away. When the Church of God had a *John Baptist* beheaded, and a *Peter* also kept in prison, and near to be made another sacrifice; what do they do? Fall upon the work of Fasting and Prayer till God works a miracle, then Prayer was made of the Church of God without ceasing; so *Daniel* understanding by Books, the number of the years of *Israels* Captivity. Now great is his strait how to understand Gods time, what doth he do in this great strait. *Chap.* 9. 3. let us behold this blessed Copy

and

and learn to write after it; *And I set my face to the Lord God by Prayer and Supplication, with Fasting and Sackcloth and Ashes.* (Mark that) *Daniel* gives up himself to work with all his might; he laboureth like a Marriner at the Pump when the ship leaketh, and Death approcheth, cease pumping and quickly followeth Sinking; here they work as for their lives. Thus did good *Daniel*, and God was intreated, and met him with an answer, *Fear not* Daniel; *for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and chasten thy self before thy God, thy Words were heard, and I am come because of thy words*; Oh that this example may be blessed of God to Churches that have great Corruptions to Conquer, and great Blessings to obtain, that they would set themselves as one shoulder to this work of Fasting and Prayer; so shall they not need to go drooping all the day long; but thus Seeking in faithfulness, shall undoubtedly Find the approch of answerable blessings; to which blessed end, for the good of Churches, Families, and every individual member; the good Lord bless these Cautions, *Amen.*

CHAP. XXV.

Containing in it the evil of Ignorance, in not knowing wherefore Gods Rod is come, nor what good it hath done: with three Directions how to know when persons are under this Decay; and three Remedies against it.

SIGN XXV.

When Gods Rod worketh so little upon you, that you can neither tell wherefore it is come, nor what good it hath done.

People

People under this Sign are very miserable, for they are not only miserable in general, but miserable under the means of reducement; the Sun of such is setting, and the Lamp a going out. It is a misery to be in need of the Physitian, but to remain in misery (after their best application as to healing) must needs be miserable: for then there remains no visible hope of remedy; When correction by the Rod will not do, (that is, will not reclaim,) then is giving up the next work.

It may be necessary to open the meaning of Gods Rod, it signifies his stripes, or chastisements; and saith the decaying Christian, it is true, these and these miseries lie upon me, and have for some time, but I know not the cause, nor what is amiss, or how to have it removed, nor wherein to be bettered. The Scripture gives us many sad instances of such a people as these, *Jer.* 2. 30. *In vain have I smitten your Children, they have received no correction*; though I do correct them, yet they do not receive it; that is, they remain the same under it. as *Jer.* 5. 3. *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved, thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; for the people turneth not to him that smiteth them; strangers have devoured their strength, yet they know it not; though gray hairs are here and there upon them*: Such as these have lost their spiritual hold, and feels not the force of Gospel-arguments, and now the Devil may take their Religion from them, if he brings but something by way of exchange, that serves and suits their external senses. It is easie for such to sell their Master for thirty pieces of Silver, just like *Israel* of old. *Exod.* 32. *When they saw that* Moses *delayed his coming* (though he is gone up to the Mount with God) *yet they make themselves new Gods*: meer shows, and forsake

forsake the true God; this is a most miserable state, but how shall we know we are under this dying Sign, and get help against it.

First, When no affliction or Rod that comes upon you, doth so much trouble you, as to provoke to a diligent search what is the cause of what is come. *Jer.* 8. 6, 7. *I hearkned and heard, but they spake not aright, no man repented him of his evil, saying, what have I done? The Stork, Turtle, and Swallow, observe their time, but my people know not the Judgments of the Lord*; They know not wherefore my Rod is come, but if I afflict them, they get it off as soon as they can, not considering, that if it do not mend them, I shall bring seven times worse Judgments upon them; As it is with some, and our experience can speak to the truth of it: Let God visit their family with sickness, they will send to the physitian, and if he goeth further and bring death, they will bury their dead, as fashionably as they can, but hardly inquire, saying, what have I done? or what ought I to learn?

Secondly, When if you are wrought upon to inquire after the Cause, you center in generals; that is, some sin or other not descending to particulars; for this and this evil, it is thus and thus with me.

Thirdly, As God never speaketh without Cause, so he never speaketh but to purpose, what doth not help shall further hurt; his Word and Sword shall not return in vain; Herein lyeth the skill of Christianity, not to acknowledge in the general, that they suffer for sin, but to fall knowingly upon particulars; thus and thus have I done, the Devil is not wanting here to use his skill; for the keeping blind-fold a decaying Christian from sight and sense of the wound and cause wherefore it came, as the surest remedy against

gainſt reformation; and certainly it is Gods Leſſon that we read the Rod, and wherefore it is come; even his common Judgments teach this. For ſeldom or never is a ſin Puniſhed, but a curious eye may eaſily read the ſin in the Puniſhment; the ſin of Wantonneſs under Fulneſs, may eaſily be read in the ſcarcity of Bread; the ſin of a haughty ſtretched out Neck, and Wanton eyes, may be eaſily read in a Leprous Scab; *inſtead of a ſweet ſmell, a ſtink; inſtead of a girdle, a rent; inſtead of well ſet hair, baldneſs; inſtead of beauty, burning. How doth the City ſit ſolitary, that was full of people, ſhe that was great among the princes is become Tributary; ſhe weepeth ſore in the night, her tears are on her cheeks, her adverſaries the chief, her enemies proſper*; Wherefore is this? The Spirit of God makes anſwer, *The Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her Tranſgreſſions.* Lam. 3. The hand of the pitiful Women have Sodden their own Children, they were their meat in the deſtruction of the daughter of my people, *The Crown is fallen from off our heads; Wo unto us for we have ſinned!* Chap. 5. 16. Here is our puniſhment, and in this you may read our Wantonneſs in Sin; we were full, and now are hungry; we abuſed our plenty, and it is turned into ſcarcity. When *Englands* Peace was bleſſed with Plenty, and that Plenty abuſed with Pride; God ſent or ſuffered a Civil Sword to witneſs againſt its Pride; and complained of the abuſe of its Plenty: poor *London* in ſixty five, and ſixty ſix, might read in legible Characters its Sin in its Puniſhment, when the fire left us no houſe, and the Plague left us no inhabitant; Pride and fulneſs of bread, and abundance of Idleneſs called upon us to come; *And behold the Works of God, what deſolation he had made in* London.

But

But Thirdly, When though you may confeſs in the general, and deſcend into particulars, yet if there be not right ſorrow for, and turning from ſin, you are ſtill under this dying Sign; It is poſſible to confeſs in the general, and reſt here.

Lord have mercy upon us poor ſinners, and not conſider wherein, and for what we make this confeſſion; this is common among the Sons of Men at one time pray this prayer on a general faſting day, in point of confeſſion: but anon, Lord I thank thee I am not as other men, nor even as this Publicane in point of Juſtification; in the one, forget or know not the ſin or ſins ſenſibly, for which they have made confeſſion; in the other, plead ſelf acceptance, and ſhut out Jeſus upon the point of ſome particulars of common honeſty, or juſtice, which they make their Idol. But further, It is poſſible to confeſs in general, and to deſcend into particulars, yea, the very ſin or ſins for which the Rod is come, and to center here, and to take up our reſt, ſhort of the God of reſt; coming thus far will be but woful if alone; and therefore confeſſion muſt be particular, and accompanyed with Sorrow for, and turning from. In *Jeremiahs* time, there was a people very ſecure in going but thus far. *Chap. 7. 4. Truſt not in lying words, ſaying, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are theſe, If ye throughly amend your ways,* as well as confeſs them, then will I cauſe you to dwell ſafely; though you cry *the Temple of the Lord,* and that be a truth in it ſelf, it is a lying word in your mouth, and will end in diſappointment, except you throughly do as you ſay; The good Lord help us from hence, to cut off every IDOL, and to cut down every GROVE, and to forſake them as well as to confeſs them; and if thy right eye offend thee,

pluck

pluck it out, its better enter into life blind and maimed, then having two eyes and two hands to be cast into Hell, where their worm *never dies*, and the fire *never goes out*.

Now as Remedies against this dying Sign.

First, Keep your Judgments under continual information, from those Texts of Scripture, that declares what the Rod is sent for. *Deut.* 17. may well be alluded to, the King must have the *Law by him continually, that he may read therein, and why? That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he might learn to fear the Lord his God continually.* So that you see he was daily to be informing his Judgment in the Law, as the proper way to fear the Lord his God, and to avoid sinning against him: once informing the Judgment will not do, so as to carry force to the keeping from doing evil, except there be a daily tutoring the mind in the same things again, and again; as often rubbing the hands causeth heat, and often whetting the instrument keepeth from rust, and maketh sharp; even so, often informing the understanding and Judgment with some such Texts as these, bears such a stroak upon the heart, as to deliver it from going in that path, attended with such woes from Heaven *Levit.* 26. 14, 15, 16, 17. *If you will not hearken to me and do all my commandments, I will appoint over you terror; yea, and set my face against you, and plague you for your sins.* Job 36. 18. *Because there is wrath, beware, lest he take thee away with his stroak, then a great ransome cannot deliver thee.* The Prophet *Isaiah* in Chap. 5. from the 8*th* to the 23*d.* verse, pronounceth woe upon woe six times over, cloathing transgressors with woes, as a man is cloathed with his garment.

Secondly,

Secondly, Content not your selves on this side a heart so tender, as to be under continual feeling fear of God and his Judgments. Christians should be restless and not cease by prayer to cry night and day, that God would make them large sharers in the promises of the new Covenant. *Ezek.* 33. *I will take away thy stony heart, and give thee a heart of flesh*; thy hard heart, and give thee a soft heart; Mans heart is like mettal, and mettal you know that is hard and unweldy, that will not receive an impression, is put to the fire to soften, to make it receive the stroak, in 2 *Chron.* 34. 27. you have a lively instance of a soft heart; *because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thy self before me; my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, I am afraid of thy Judgments.* Psal. 119. 120.

Thirdly, When at any time a Rod from God comes upon you, pass Judgment still that there is some cause, and cease not praying and searching till you find it out. This will certainly preserve you from being under the possession of this dying Sign. *Josh.* 7. *Israel* comes to loss, what doth he then do? *Cry, alas O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought these people over, to deliver us into the hands of the* Amorites *to destroy us.*

Hear they cry to *Joshua*, he cries to God, *O Lord God! What shall I say, when* Israel *turns their backs before their enemies; for the* Canaanites, *and all the inhabitants of the Land shall hear of it, and cut off our names from off the Earth? And what wilt thou do for thy great name?* Here *Joshua* pleads with God, rents his Garments, falls upon his Face, casts dust upon his Head, and cries mightily to God for relief, and in the close of the day meets with his answer; get thee up, wherefore lyest thou thus upon thy face? Knowest thou not what *Israel* hath done, make speedy

dy

dy inquiry for they have sinned, therefore they cannot stand before their enemies, neither will I be with them any more, except they take away the accursed thing from among them: God here tells them, there is a cause sets them upon the work of Search. Now the Lot is cast, and it falls upon *Achan* who had seen and coveted a goodly babylonish Garment, (which shows that Sin may look with a goodly Countenance, whilst it is but the *accursed thing*) two hundred shekels of Silver, and a wedge of Gold, of fifty shekels weight, till all these with *Achan*, and all his, is stoned and buryed under the heap, the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned away, although a *Joshua* is at Prayer, that at another time so prevails, that the Sun stands still for a whole day together; *was there ever such a day as this, that God hearkened to the voyce of a man?* Yet now cannot be heard until the cause be found out, and the Camp purged; I shall leave this to consideration and Gods blessing, and so pass to the 26*th*. Sign.

CHAP. XXVI.

Shewing where sin takes its beginning, and how by degrees if hearkned to, it works ruine; with six special Marks, how persons (though pardoned) may know when God will suffer them to fall into sin anew.

SIGN XXVI.

When the thoughts of your bosem-lust, or any other sin, is more prevalent with you, then pleasing God.

Thought

Thought is the first door of the mind inwardly, as the eye and ear are of the body outwardly; here sin takes first place, and if here it be not first slain, it will increase to conception, and from thence to action; the eye and ear carry things to the thought, and the thought carries things to the conception, and conception to affection, and affection to consent, and consent to action; and thus you may *behold how great a fire a little spark kindles*: Now every good man hath had a dearest lust, and every wicked man hath a dearest lust, that he most hugs, loves, and serves; though evil men do obeysance to any sin that suits with their liking, yet there is some particular sin to which they have most single regard; and the best of Gods people are under more particular inclination, to some one particular sin then other, and in danger to fall and be overcome thereby. 1 *Kings* 8. 38. there the Scripture notes this, under the name of *heart-plague*; also *Psal.* 18. 23. *Ah mine iniquity.* Now this comes to the thoughts for entertainment, and there is greatest possibility of finding entertainment; for which cause Gods word so much inveighs against thoughts, when they are about evil exercises. *Gen.* 6. 5. *Every imagination of the thought of his heart was evil, and only evil.* Jer. 4. 14. *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Prov. 24. 9. *The thoughts of foolishness is sin.* Thought is the least motion of the mind, and whether it be wicked or good, is not hid from God, nor from Gods Vice-gerent, even Conscience; *No thought can be with-held from thee.* Job 42. 2. No secret design, though in the very heart of man, can be so carried on as that God cannot be privy to it. *Amos* 4. 13. *That declareth to man what is his thought.* Now thought, though the least motion of the mind, yet being imployed with continual good objects, as the Resurrecti-

on, and Judgment to come, thinking ſtill what ſhall be the eſtate of the ſaved and damned, hath bleſſed force both upon the heart and converſation, to regulate things there, and by all poſſible means labours to work ſuch up to Gods likeneſs, that they may have boldneſs in judgment; even ſo (and let conſcience now ſpeak) letting the thoughts have to do, (ſo as to like of) thoſe vain ſhady delights, that the hearts of men are apt to ſet up to themſelves, as Uncleanneſs, Covetouſneſs, *&c.* hath as great force on the converſation, to carry it Hell-ward. It highly concerns Chriſtians therefore, to be upon the examination of their ſtate, as to thriving or decaying, and to ſee to the Thought what branch it bears; the beginnings of ſin inwardly being there, and be certain to paſs this judgment upon your ſelves, that if to your thoughts, your former deareſt luſt in any branch of it, or any other ſin be pleaſant to you; that is, tall, lovely, comely, or deſirable, and not rather hateful, frightful, burthenſome, black and helliſh; you are a dying or decaying to heaven, and heavenly things; and very ſeaſonable to ſuch may the counſel of *Peter* be, *Repent of this thy wickedneſs, and pray God the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.* I ſhall from hence take occaſion to give you ſix Marks, by which you may know when God will ſuffer your Return back to your old deareſt luſt, or ſome other ſin; and they may by Gods bleſſing and your care, ſlay iniquity in its firſt motion.

Firſt, The firſt Mark may be this, when after God hath pardoned the ſins you once lived in, you are not abaſed in your own eyes, ſo as to walk humbler with God all your days: Now this is Gods great end in forgiving all ſin. *Ezek.* 16. 62, 63. *I will eſtabliſh my Covenant with thee, and thou ſhalt know that I am the Lord, that thou maiſt remember,* (mark that) *and be*

be confounded, and never open thy mouth more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee. So Ezek. 36. 29, 30, 31. *I also will save you from all your uncleannesses,* both guilt and filth, *then shall you remember your own evil ways, and shall lothe your selves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.* So that you see, God expects to receive the fruit of self-abasement from the pardoned.

But Secondly, When because of your graces, you are in any measure lifted up, to admire grace more then giver: By grace here, I mean the Graces of gifts, as ability to pray or preach, *&c.* distinct from the Graces of Humility, Meekness and Charity; for a man may be rich in the one, and yet poor in the other. 1 *Cor.* 13. 1, 2, 3.

Now you must distinguish between Graces and Gifts, with what allowance the Scripture gives, otherwise ye will confound both by mixing them together; for though Graces be Gifts, and Gifts be Graces, yet are they not such as prove, that of necessity where the Gifts or Graces of Preaching, or Praying, or Knowledge, or Tongues are, there will be the Graces of Humility and Thankfulness; though it will prove there should be such Graces; the reason I conceive lyeth here, and it may be worthy our noting, (thus) The Graces of gifts in the sense we distinguish, are more properly given of God for the benefit of others; as he gave his Spirit to *Saul,* for the benefit of *Israel*: Now other Graces are most properly given for the profit of our selves, because with the one we may perish, without the other we cannot be saved. Now both this dying Sign, and the distinction may be of use, if considered among Churches, for experience tells us, while the humble in heart have stood with their low and mean parts, in the mean time those tall in Gifts have fallen like *Dagon* before the *Ark*; and

it is good none here be secure, for though Gifts be Graces, and that from God the giver, yet may a person fall in love with the Gift, and himself for the Gift, as to be lifted up to the forgetting God the Giver, 2 *Chron.* 26. 15, 16. compared with *Chap.* 32. 25.

Thirdly, A third sign of Gods suffering persons to fall into sin, may be this; When signal favours from God given you are not minded, but forgotten: There is none that lives but are more or less tryed by God in this very kind, some time or other of their life, for they are not only sharers in Gods common favours, that he daily bestows upon all, as Rain, fruitful seasons, food, rayment, health, strength, and the like; but also signal and special favours, as Redemption from the Grave, when at the very brink to visible view, even favours of such like kind as *Israel* had, when the first-born in *Egypt* dyed, not a Dog barks against *Israel*; when Plague or Sword sweeps away by hundreds, on our right hand, and on our left, and we remain untouched; this certainly is never to be forgotten: so the red-Sea deliverance, the Pillar of Cloud by day, and of Fire by night, together with the dividing of the Waters of *Jordan*, are Parables doubtless in Gospel days, and we under as gracious Obligations to remember with thankfulness Gods loving kindness. *David* that good man, makes observation in this case of old *Israel*, and hath left their stain for generations to come, to read and take warning by. *Psal*, 106, 9, 10, 11. 12, 13. God rebuked the red Sea, and it was dryed up, and redeemed them from the hand of their enemies; *yet they soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel*; So 2 *Chron.* 32. 24. *Hezekiah was sick to death, and he prayed to God, and he gave him a sign; but Hezekiah rendred not again according to the benefit done*

done him; (mark that) his return was not as signal as his favour, therefore God suffers wrath to come upon him; by all which it is clear, that more then ordinary favours, calls for more then ordinary returns; and where its a wanting, God is provoked to suffer such to fall: I pray God make this hint as acceptable, as it is seasonable to those that shall meet with it.

Fourthly, A fourth Mark how persons may know when God will suffer them to fall into Sin; When under great straits, you are not much with God for wisdom and counsel; Neglect here must needs be dangerous, for it is a kind of tempting God, a daring as it were the holy One of *Israel*; When under great straits that for good ends he brings upon them, they are careless to request his help for their escaping, and answerable gaining. No man that trades in the way to heaven, but at times is exercised with great straits of one kind or another, the very entrance into it promiseth nothing less. *Mark* 8. 34. *Whosoever will come after me, let him take up his Cross daily and follow me*; So that Jesus Christ would have persons count upon meeting with hard things, that will be his Disciples: *For man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.* Job 5.7. Now that none may sink under them, Jesus Christ hath made provision, which if they neglect they are like to perish. *Mat.* 26. 4. *The Shepheard shall be smitten, and the Sheep all scattered*; now the best preservative against such a danger, is, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.* Luke 21. 26. *Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after what shall come to pass; for the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken: Therefore watch ye and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape.* By these Texts, together with *Phil.* 4. 6. *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, let your requests*

be made known unto God. Clearly noting, that persons under straits, are not in Gods security out of the way of prayer; well therefore may this prove an acceptable caution to every Christian, when he undergoeth his share in the Cross of Jesus, to make his complaint and earnest cries to him by prayer, with supplication; No doubt but such will find Christ seasonably helping him: but if you find a secure drowsiness attend the heart, then conclude your misery is not yet at the height: The Disciples are found asleep three times together, and cannot watch with their Lord one hour, before their misery will be greater by his being taken from them: but I shall end this Mark, leaving for our gracious pattern the example of Jesus Christ, *who being in an Agony and sweat,* as it were great drops of blood, he at that time, *prayed the more earnestly,* Luke 22. 44.

Fifthly, When you readily close with occasions to sin; this tempts the Devil to tempt you, and tempts God to leave you; *Sampson* in *Judges* 14. seeks to take a Wife among the Uncircumcised, *that he might seek an occasion against them*: Even so, doth not the Devil make his attempts, whereby he may give an occasion to Gods People to sin; The ready closing wherewith, tempteth him further to tempt them; and indeed tempteth God to leave them: Now occasions to sin comes many ways, and from different objects, that may have but little beginning, and yet tall conclusions; sometimes the ear heareth that which sets the heart on fire; sometimes the eye seeth that which brings wo to the mind: witness *David*, who at the top of his roof, as he was walking, seeth *Bathsheba* washing her self, and her beauty passing through the casement of his eyes; this small occasion took possession, and made him a prisoner to his great overthrow,

throw: So *Josh.* 7. 21. *Achan saw among the spoils, a goodly Babylonish Garment, and a Wedge of Gold; his eye looked and his heart lusted till he was ruined.* Now every man that knoweth any thing of sins way, knows that it seeks and takes occasion from very small beginnings; *Behold how great a fire a little spark kindleth*; it begins by little, taking its degrees, and is carried through the eyes to the thoughts, then to conception, then to affection, then to consent, then to action: Now the provision the holy Scripture makes in this kind, is positively engaged by way of Precept, *To abstain from all appearances of evil.* 1 Thes. 5. 22. Clearly noting, that in order to persons certain security from the commission of all evil, they must abstain from its Appearance: very observable is Gods care to *Israel* of old, no sooner were they out of *Egypt*, but he seeks to take all occasions of sin out of their way. *Exod.* 13. 17. *And it came to pass, that when* Pharaoh *had let the People go, that God led them not through the Land of the* Philistines, *although it was near.* (note that) *lest peradventure the people see War, and return to* Egypt *again.* So Exod. 23. 13, 33. Also Deut. 7. 25. Prov. 22. 24, 25. *They must cut down their graven Images, and burn them with fire, and desire none of the silver that's on them, lest they be a snare unto them.* So the wise-man, *counsels to make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man; no not to go, lest we learn his ways, and get a snare to our souls.*

Sixthly, When you are not pitiful to the tempted, but in your prosperity forget their calamity; God is pleased many times to suffer Satan to be let loose upon some Christians, and to try them sorely, yea, to engage them deep in actual War, whilest other Christians as it were, are lookers on, to let the one see how

weak he is in the hands of this spiritual Adversary, if left to himself; and to try the other, what frame of heart he carries towards his brother in distress, and this if wisely improved turns to the great advantage of both: The personal sufferer, if he endure, becomes heir to the promise, annexed to the condition of the tempted. *Jam.* 1. 12. And the looker on, if he by beholding is so enflamed with zealous love and pity to his suffering brother, that he greatly suffers also: *The one is offended, the other burns.* 2 Cor. 11. 29. When all the strength a poor tempted soul hath, is engaged in hot fight with the Devil, Flesh, and World, then pity from lookers on, proves like a fresh recruit to a shattered Army, it so suits with Gods will, and with the tempteds want; whereas on the contrary, want of pity in lookers on, as it strengthens the hands of the Adversary, and tempts the courage of the troubled to grow flat. Now this sixth Mark is framed to that end, if the Lord will, that lookers on may not only know what frame of heart they are to be of in such season; but to provoke them to make haste to it; in *Amos* 6. 4. there was neglect to this duty, and it meets with a sad salute; *Wo to them that are at ease in Zion, that lie upon upon beds of Ivory, that drink Wine in Bowls, but are not grieved for the Afflictions of* Joseph: No iniquity (mark that) so provokes God as to be preferred in punishment before this; *They must go into Captivity, with the first that go Captive.* Amos 1. 11. Numb. 20. from the 14. to the 22. God will not bear such a pitiless heart in his very Enemies. *Isa.* 47. 6. *I was wrath with my People, and gave them into thy hands; and upon thy ancient very heavily hast thou laid thy yoke; Therefore in one day shall come upon thee loss of Children, and Widow-hood. Remember therefore those that are in Bonds, as bound*

with

With them, and them that suffer Adversity, as being also of the same Body. Heb. 13. Read and consider, and the good Lord give you understanding; *Amen.* And so pass to the 27*th.* Sign.

CHAP. XXVII.

Shewing Satans way, by which he gets in our day most advantage upon Churches; and a plain discovery of the first rise of the Quakers; *shewing also the great Law of Edification, to be preferred in all Doctrine; with Cautions to such as live out of all Church way; With Cautions how Churches are to behave themselves in time of rest from persecution.*

SIGN. XXVII.

When you are mighty curious about the lesser matters of Gods Law, and mighty careless about the weightier.

When Satan the grand Engine of begining and perfecting a Christians ruine, cannot at once knock his heart and hands from off the Ordinances of Gods House, thereby to make him destitute of the very means to good, he usually works this way, where he finds meet subjects to be working upon, *viz.* Make some more curious by far then God would have them; and so wholly taken up with the lesser matters of Gods Law, that he may have the fairer opportunito make them as careless in the weightier; by this manner of dress he deceives far more, then by his common known dress of visible prophaneness; this being so far from the road of the rude ranting way,

that

that it shows, yea and pretends to exceed Christians in their right Saint-like way, carrying with it profession of, and contention for commands of God. Which spirit meeting with ignorant and inconsiderate people makes a noise as though it would drive the world before it, while the fairer, surer Christian, that carries on his matters temperately, giving due respect to every command, yet seems in their eye to burn so dim, that they are ready to bid him stand further off, they are holier than he.

This deceit is a wonderful mysterious one, and without all doubt worketh mightily, not only among the Churches, but in and among the People called *Quakers*, whose spirit is yet kept under by the wise God, till a riper season, from shewing it self in that Atheists dress, that certainly it did rise from, and certainly will end in. They being of all people Pharasaical like, out of all cry, contenders for that that comparatively is but the shell of Christianity, and are so far from contending for, that they set themselves even against the kernel or substance of Religion; and the Church of God can truly witness this, for from among themselves are some gone out, with as fair pretences as can be, of living more to God in the Spirit and power of holiness, and yet quickly shewing themselves in the mystery of carrying on most abominable Atheistical principles of denying both the Resurrection of the body from the grave of the earth, and Judgment day to come; And so bend their bow at the overthrowing the very foundation of godliness, in the mystery of *Egyptian* darkness, and yet under the highest pretences of Angel-light. It is clearly evident, that the first rise of that spirit laid its beginning upon these very materials, of being curious in the lesser, and careless in the weightier, making nothing secretly to act gross

abomination

abomination (as some are witness) yet to publick view, where they might have the fairer advantage to deceive the simple, did make great show of tender respect to some lesser matters of Gods Law; and indeed out-talk every body, while God knows they did not thus plead out of true love to Gods Law that they had, but because no bait would so fit their hook, and carry on the business they designed like this.

Now Satan himself full well knows, that it is in vain for him to expect the accomplishing any great design among the separated Churches, any other way, for filthiness of flesh is so manifest, that every body among them that knows but any thing, knows they are redeemed from that, but filthiness of the spirit which works secretly, and yet ends carnally and mortally, is his grand working way; which doubtless the Apostle well knew, when he gave this exhortation to the *Corinth* Church, with this description, which I pray observe. *Chap.* 7. 1. where he beseecheth them not only, *to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh*; but by way of distinction, *filthiness of Spirit also*; and that in order to their perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Read also *Isa.* 30. 21. And by this mysterious means he takes in some place, and among some people by companies, that most of them in their true Church standing were the carnallest, mean, and ignorantest Christians, having in them as little experience as could be of the power of Godliness; so little, that if they had any less, would have had too little to be born by the Church; yet intangling themselves with this spirit of deceit, (or filthiness of spirit) have grown mighty confident, bold, and lifted up, too wise for their teachers, despising those far before them in grace; yet far behind them in their account

count; and very justly may and doth the Lord let such fall into spiritual deceit, notwithstanding they plead for some of his own law, they being most careless, where he would have them most careful; so renders their care in the lesser, while careless in the greater, of no account with him at all, he taking no pleasure in such, but greatly disdaining them. *Mat.* 23. 23. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, for you pay tyth of mint, Anniſe, and Cummin, and have omitted the* weightier *matters of the Law.* They are under Gods wo, though they do what they ought to do, yet in leaving undone something weightier, that ought to be done also. Multitudes as the Scripture witnesseth have been, and God knows in our days are, deceived in this matter, who content themselves, some in being mighty just between man, and man, which in it self is good, yet loose in other matters; others great Church-men, yet abominable proud, covetous, or both, much like those. *Isa.* 58. 2. *That seek God daily, and delight to know his wayes,* (mark that) *as a Nation that did righteousness, and delight in approching to God; yea, they fast and afflict their Souls.* How excellent are all these things mentioned, and worthy our noting? that though found in this practice, yet sent to by God to be told of their sins; all which noted together proves, that faithfulness in some truths, while unfaithful in other truths, more, or as material, renders the services of such to be of no account: all which I have briefly noted for caution to two sorts of people in special.

First, Such as live out of most way of Gospel separation, and yet keeping themselves under the observation of some truths, that conscience and the light of nature dictates to them, though under apparent neglect, and in disobedience to many known Gospel-truths;

truths; that they know or easily may know, following the Counsel of God, *to cry after knowledge, and lift up their voyce for understanding; searching as they search for their silver; digging as they dig for their hid treasure:* That is, taking as great pains for the knowledge of the true treasure, as they take to possess themselves with worldly treeasure; for the getting whereof they rise up Early, go to bed Late, and eat the bread of painfulness; but all this while content themselves with lazie desires, and faint wishes after the true treasure, and will not close with any thing that proves costly in getting or keeping. *James* 2. 19. *Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well, the Devils also believe and tremble; but thou wilt know O vain man, that faith without works is dead, being alone;* Therefore faith must be of a Gospel kind, and proved to be so by Gospel works: Though a man should beg pardon of his sin, of lying, cheating, covetousness, or uncleanness, or such like works of the flesh all his dayes, and yet continue in any, or all of these; yea, though he could cry for it, till his heart-strings break, he must miss of it, asking out of the way of the promise, in which pardon is decreed by the God of Heaven to be given; so that every repentance supposed to be right, may be wrong, and that faith not of a Gospel kind, though of a Gospel shew; If a man would have Salvation with his sins, or Christ and his sins too, he goes out of the channel of the penitent, who are wont to meet God in sorrow for sin, and turning from sin. *Prov.* 18.13. *He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper, but who so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.*

Now deceitful hearts, through the Devils wiles, misconstrue promises of Glory, taking part for the whole, having confident dependance upon the promi-

ses

ses of life; and can cite many Scriptures wherein are gracious promises made by God to sinners, but never consider what kinds of sinners they be, to whom the promises are made, neither take any due care to perform the condition the promise is made upon; so please themselves in the hope of Heaven, not diligently weighing the foundation their hope is built upon. It is like to prove with such, *as with a hungry man, he dreameth, and behold he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul is empty.* Isa. 29. 8. Many will say to Christ in the great day, *we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets,* therefore *Lord, Lord, open to us; depart from me ye workers of iniquity*; whose hope must perish in being not of that purifying kind, that renews the soul God-ward, but still allows the flesh a commanding power, forgetting that great mark, which proves the hope of Gods Elect to be of the right kind. 1 *John* 3. 1. *And every one that hath* This Hope *in him, purifyeth himself even as he is pure.*

Secondly, Let this serve for caution to such in Churches, as are, or are like to be curious in the lesser, whiles careless in the greater. Great hath been the trouble of such Churches as can witness this decay to have been amongst them; it still took the most inconsiderate, that lived too much below comparison in Gods Law, where or when to be more or less in condescention in order to the best maintaining edification; which is the great end of all institution: they forgetting, or not knowing this, have gone so unseasonable about setting up the lesser, that they have debased the weightier; making the remedy prove far worse then the disease; carrying on this work with such manner of management, that an indifferent stander by could not but imagine, that sure the whole will of God,

lay

lay in the one, two or three leſſer things, that they ſo pleaded for; eſpecially, ſeeing it carried on with that heat of Spirit, and reſolution of taking place, that the bonds of love, and Church-Communion could not hold them.

Whence hath the diviſions among theſe Goſpel-Churches, both in affection and practice riſen, if not from this very root? Cannot hundreds witneſs, yea and mourn for what they know in this matter? Hath not the great law of love, and the great deſign of all Ordinances, to wit, Edification, been ſacrificed for the will of ſome novelties? I know what I ſpeak to be truth, and that I have many witneſſes.

The honour of God, the credit of his Religion, when it hath come in competition, hath been leſs preferred then ſome new apprehenſion, if not ſome old errour newly eſpouſed; doth not this preach perſons wonderfully carnal, and wiſe in their own conceits? How far have ſuch gone from Chriſts good example? *I have yet many things to ſay to you, but ye cannot bear them now.* Let us mind a little, their beſt ſeaſon of receiving was Chriſts beſt ſeaſon of declaring: Doth not Chriſt by this, teach every Diſciple of his, to digeſt well themſelves?

Firſt, What they have to offer before they offer it; and the beſt ſeaſon too; may not, nay have not ſome by ſeeking before due ſeaſon, to ſet up ſome one leſſer law, thrown down ſeveral greater laws; nay hath not ſome unſeaſonably bringing in the truth, together with the ill management thereof; brought into the Church by head and ſhoulders, *Envying*, *Strife*, and *Diviſion*, and caſt out *Humbleneſs of mind*, *Long-ſuffering*, *Gentleneſs* and *Bowels*? Doth not the holy Apoſtle ſet a copy for all, how to walk in this reſpect? 1 *Cor.* 3. 1. *And I Brethren could not ſpeak unto you, as unto ſpiri-*

tual,

tual, but as unto carnal, even babes in Christ; I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye have not been able to bear it, neither yet are ye able. Doth not he here consider their inward constitution, and prepare his dish to their stomack? And is not this Heavens road-way to bring in the greater? By an orderly first bringing in the lesser; witness this holy Apostles carriage. 1 *Cor.* 12. 17, 18, 19. *Did I make a gain of you, by any of them I sent to you; I desired* Titus, *and with him I sent a brother; did* Titus *make a gain of you? We speak before God in Christ, we do all things dearly beloved for your edifying*: he had respect to the great design, Edification; and when requiring their performance of a lesser duty, to wit, *giving their temporals to them from whom they received spirituals, even as the Lord hath ordained; that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel*: Yet as I said but now, if the calling for the performance of this duty, will not stand with their edification in the main, he will rather preach the Gospel of God freely. 2 *Cor.* 11. 9. *But when I was present with you,* (And wanted) *I was chargeable to no man, and in all things I have kept my self from being burthensome to you; and so I will keep my self*: you see, though he wants necessaries, he will take nothing of them, but rather over-burthen other Churches that are better spirited to bear it, then among this people labour in vain; may not all mourn for Gospel-loss, through the want of *such walking* one towards another in our days? How prosperous in probability, may not I say in certainty had the truth been over it is, through our Nation, had it not been for those divisions that now are among the Churches? Whose beginnings came in this way? I do secretly rejoyce, to think what a blessed issue would have been reaped of general harmony amongst Gods Children,

while

while all persons in all places, and among all people spoke the same things.

But on the contrary, here the Church rests from persecution or Trouble without, what then follows? Doth she not settle upon her Lees, while she was troubled, she united and became one shoulder to every burden, now she hath rest? What doth God call for, that then she be edifyed, and walk in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comfort of the Holy-Ghost, and increased, growing more in goodness and greatness, may it not be for Lamentation, that Experience hath told us the contrary, when the Church had rest in times past, grew she not *Carnal*, *Froward*, *Worldly*, *Proud*, *Censorious*, *Envious*, *Quarrelsom*, and fell from *Humility* and *Gentleness*, into *Emulation*, *Wrath*, *Strife*, *Sedition*; and for this hath not God scourged some to loss of Substance, others of Life it self, and driven all back into *Egypt*. Again, shall twelve years experience be sufficient to Warn us for ever to Live in Love, seeing now there is like to come a little time of reviving again? Would we have it last long, and end in Weal? Let us labour with might after the good Apostles Spirit, to be all things, and do all things to Edification. My Fellow Travellers for *Jerusalem* the City of God; let us study that Lesson, not resting short of living the life of it. *Phil.* 2. 3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better then themselves*; This will bring into their Candlesticks those two glorious lights of Gods-House PEACE and LOVE, while we esteem others better then our selves, there will be Love, and where Love is, there will be forbearance; it beareth all things, it hopeth all things, endureth all things, and is kind; and where this Love is, there will be

peace, and a habitation fitted for the Prince of peace to take up his abode in. Alas, Alas, Doth not the Adversary hinder the Building greatly? while he can truly say, do you not see how they are divided among themselves, and lay low one another? Doth not also the conscious seeker stumble greatly at this, and say, what shall I do? Where to settle I cannot tell? Doth not the carnal Christian because of this please himself, that he is got into the world of liberty from all Church-way? O that the Lord would be intreated to awaken the upright! yet to make it their prayer, and care night and day, how they may in *Places, Times, Things*, especially in the main, both to speak and do the same thing; this will be blessed with better success to God and Gospel, in one year, then the best indeavours of another kind, for time past hath been in twenty years.

I have done, and the good Lord begin to set this my humble caution to Churches home, that they all may take the good Apostles rule. 1 *Cor.* 14. 26. *How is it then brethren, when you come together, every one hath a Psalm, hath a Doctrine, hath a Tongue, hath a Revelation, hath an interpretation*: Let all things be done to Edifying.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Shewing the neceſſity of humble waiting, and confident depending upon the holy Spirit, to help in the great work of mortification; the neceſſity whereof is ſhewed in ſeven particulars, with ſix directions how to get and keep this holy Spirit.

SIGN XXVIII.

When the holy Spirits help to the great work of mortification, ſeems not of abſolute neceſsity to you.

That is, its working help, and way is not taken heed to: neceſſity of the holy Spirits help in this matter of great concernment, cannot be known, ſo as to be to this great end worthily improved, without knowledge to a good degree, how in this great work the holy Spirits help is concerned, and whether ſo concerned, that without its help, mortification of ſin in its right order, cannot be brought about. Now where the holy Spirit is ſought unto, and humbly waited upon for help, he doth ſhew himſelf helpful in theſe particulars.

Firſt, In fortifying the mind of a Chriſtian with ſpiritual materials, meet to wage war with the ſpiritual adverſaries, *Fleſh*, *World*, and *Devil*, all which are ſtrongly ingaged againſt a poor convert. *Gal.* 5.7 *The fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit*; deſiring and ſtriving to do what is directly contrary to the Spirit, like a perfect oppoſite, aiming and ſtriving to ſet up all impurity, contrary to, or againſt the Spirits purity. Now the

mind being the most noble part in man, that the flesh is most ingaged against; so that *Peter* in his 1 *Epist.* 2. 4, 12. cautions to *abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,* or mind; therefore saith the holy Apostle St. *Paul. Rom.* 7. 23. *I see a Law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, to lead me captive to the Law of sin, in my members*; And saith Jesus Christ. *Mat.* 22. 37. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* All which together, proving the mind to be the most noble part, at which the holy Spirit to possess with good, and the adversary to possess with bad, hath a chief and only aim, knowing right well, that conquest there carries away the whole man; and therefore the actions of good men, and wicked men, are more or less reputed good or bad, as they are more or less managed with the Mind. *Nehem.* 4. 6, 7. *The builders that wrought upon the wall, with one hand, held a weapon, and with the other hand wrought in the work; for the people had a Mind to work*: which notes how mightily a willing mind doth contribute to a successfull work; and that this is greatly esteemed off by God. read *Isa.* 26. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee*; thou wilt keep them, such are the proper subjects of Gods great care, whose minds on God is stayed, and they shall have peace, peace, that is, peace in its best performances, and in all its degrees. Peace at home, abroad, in storms, in calms, within, without, equivalent with that blessing annexed to commandment-keepers. *Deut.* 28. beginning. But on the contrary. *Prov.* 21. 29. *The sacrifice of the Wicked is abomination to the Lord*; how much more, *when he brings it with a wicked Mind*; So that at the best the wickeds sacrifices are abominable, but how much more, when they come

with

with a mind set on wickedness? *Phil.* 3. 18, 19. *For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, who mind earthly things*: Now all this premised, bespeaks the necessity of the holy Spirits help to fortifie the mind with spiritual materials, meet to wage war with the spiritual adversary; *for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable to God*; and is therefore put in opposition to the works of the flesh. *Ephes.* 5. 9, 10. *Gal.* 5. 22. *But the fruits of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, meekness, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith*; now a mind destitute of this holy Spirits fruit, is no way able to withstand the motions of the flesh; but is carried captive with every lustful bait at the tempters will; *for they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh*; and as it is the care of the evil one, to have the mind of sinners in his possession, even so the first work the holy Spirit doth upon the converted, is to put Gods law into their mind, by demolishing those dark works, in those that turn to God, both in Debasing what was, and in Exalting what was not. *Ephes.* 4. 17. *This I say therefore, and testifie in the Lord, that you walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanities of their mind.* verse 22. *But that you put off concerning the former conversation, the old man with his deeds*, and then is a necessity of *putting on the new man with his deeds*; *for if the house*, or heart *be empty, swept, and garnished from* all bad, and yet not possest with like good, the evil one enters again, and makes the case worse then before; All which notes the necessity of having dependance upon the holy Spirit. *Ephes.* 5. 16, 17. To fortifie the mind with spiritual materials, meet to wage war with this spiritual adversary; and thus I have done with the first mark, and come to the second.

Secondly, It is the Spirits work, to discover to the Christian man, wherein his danger most lies, that is, by what bait, and to what evils the tempter is most like to draw him; Ignorance here causeth people to go into the tempters way, and without defilement more or less, they can hardly return, and surely *Solomon* alludes to this in one of his petitions to God for *Israel*. 1 *Kings* 8. 38 *What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people* Israel, *which shall know every man the* Plague *of his* own Heart: clearly implying, that among *Israel* there might be, that did not know their own Hearts Plague, or wherein their danger most lay. Now the holy Spirit was given to instruct them, and so witnesseth, *Nehem.* 9. 20 *Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them*; the manner how is set out in, *Exod.* 13. 17. *And it came to pass when* Pharaoh *had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the* Philistines, *although that was near, for God said, lest they repent when they see war, and return to* Egypt *again.* It is very questionable, if not out of doubt, that this danger was not in their eye at all, *but God led them* (saith Moses,) *by his Spirit*, saith *Nehemiah*; clearly noting, that persons hearkning, find the holy Spirit not wanting to lead them in the best way, and set before them the greatest danger; one text more and so I have done with this. *Isa.* 29. 24. *They also that erred in Spirit, shall come to understanding, and they that murmured, shall learn Doctrine:* They that through ignorance went astray, shall come to understanding, or know their best way; and they that did repine, shall learn Doctrine, or be better taught.

Thirdly, The Spirits work is to discover both the strength of the tempter, and temptation, shewing to the Christian man these two things.

First,

First, That the tempter can but intice, not inforce.

Secondly, That the strength of his temptation lies in present things.

First, He can and doth prepare suitable baits and snares, but all he doth do, and can do, amounts but to thus much; *Therefore greater is he that is in you, then he that is against you*; which consideration tends greatly to a believers support, while he is able to say, I know it must be my fault if I sin against my God, for the tempter cannot force me, neither did he ever force any, he can and doth proffer his ware, putting the best face upon it, as you may see, *Gen.* 3. 4, 5. *And the Serpent saith to the Woman, ye shall not surely die; for God doth know in the day you eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.* Here he makes his bait pleasant, and to promise greater priviledge then yet they had; with which the woman is taken; *And when the Woman saw that the fruit was good, and that it was pleasant to the eye, she took thereof and did eat*; contrary to the Law. So *Josh.* 7. 20, 21. *When* Achan *saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish Garment, and a wedge of Gold, he coveted them*; which notes, that the Devils power to take, centers in preparing fair outsides, which carries some after destruction, as the Oxe goeth to the slaughter, not knowing that it is for his life; and indeed as his trade lies in shows, so the people he tradeth among, (without which he could not trade at all to any advantage) are silly people; and though silly people, yet he tradeth altogether in the dark, and therefore is called the *Ruler of darkness. Ephes.* 6. 12. And *his Kingdom a Kingdom of darkness.* Col 1. 3. *And dare not come to the light, for fear his deeds should be made manifest.*

Secondly, As he thus trades, and these are the people he tradeth with; so the strength of his temptations centers in present things; It is all he can make snares and temptations of, as is evident by these Texts. *Rom.* 8: 18. *The sufferings of this* Present *world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* So Gal. 1. 4. *Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from this* present *evil World.* 2 Tim. 4. 10. Demas *hath forsaken me, having imbraced the* Present *World.* Now all these Scriptures speak the tempters strength to lie in present things, which made the holy Apostle have light account of his suffering 2 *Cor.* 4. 17. *For our light Affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* He compareth it with the state to come, gives it the next count to a cypher, calling it momentary; and the utmost we can make, or any sinner that lives at greatest height of worldly pleasure, must confess all present things will amount to but these three.

First, Such as goeth but Shin-deep.

Secondly, Such as may properly be called minute joy, that is ours this minute, but either it taken from us, or we from it next minute, it lasts not.

Thirdly, At the longest worldly pleasure serveth us but till we come to the grave, and there it leaves us.

Having now done with the third Discovery of the holy Spirits help, I shall briefly add two or three more, and pass to the Twenty ninth *Sign* of a dying Christian.

Fourthly, The holy Spirit discovers what unprofitableness is found in sin after committed, working strong convictions upon the heart of the sinner, and forceth him to confess that his eager pursuit after his sin,

sin, now he hath had his hearts desire granted, contracts but wo and sorrow, though sweet in the mouth while eating, yet bitter in the belly when eaten. *Mark* 8. 36, 37. *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and loose his soul? Or what shall a man give in Exchange for his soul?* When such texts as this is brought home to the conscience, it doth so awaken where not willingly withstood, that sins hold must needs fall.

Fifthly, The Spirit furnisheth the Christian with spiritual Arguments, bearing such force upon his heart, as makes him able to break out with such replies as these.

First, All the Devil hath to make an argument of, is but present things, and they suit not with my person, for my person is made up of soul and body, and all he offereth, doth but respect and serve that body, that shortly must be worms-meat; and therefore it will not profit me to lose my soul for present things.

Secondly, As all he hath to make an Argument of, suits not with my person; in like manner, it suits not with my condition; for if I have all that heart can wish, it carries me but to the grave, and there leaves me, and wo be to me if such works follow me; for alas I must be raised again, *and he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.*

Sixthly, The holy Spirit helps in lending the immediate supplies of new strength proportionable to our straits, and will not *suffer those that wait on him to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but will with the temptation make way to escape, that they may be able.* 1 Cor. 10. 13.

Seventhly, The holy Spirit helps by striving with the heart, to draw it after holy performances, following

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ing the soul up and down with sweet visits, and secret whispers, prompting and inclining it God-ward, preparing a season for the heart to draw nigh to God, and then preparing the heart for that season: *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit it self maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.* Rom. 8. 26. May not all this teach us, to put a high value upon the holy Spirits Help, to the great work of Mortification, by all means striving to please and not grieve this holy Spirit, by which we are *sealed to the day of Redemption.*

Object. Having now spoken of the holy Spirits help, may not some from hence inquire, what may be done to the obtaining, not only its visits now and then, as a wafaring man that tarrieth for a night; but its constant company to abide with the soul?

Answ. There may be three Directions laid down briefly for its obtaining; with three Directions for its keeping.

First, For its obtaining; Get a deep sense of its want and worth.

Secondly, Get longings of heart after its supply.

Thirdly, Make humble supplications to the Father for it.

First, Get a deep sense of its want and worth; its Jesus Christs own argument, that the *world cannot receive this Spirit, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* John 14. 17. Now by personal examination of that souls barrenness, where the holy Spirit either comes but seldome, or stays not long, may some considerable sense of its want be discerned, and consequently of its worth; all those *black sinful* works acted by the sons of men, are the effects of the holy

Spirits

Spirits absence; and indeed to what degree, a good man is a stranger here, to that degree he is weak & unable, either to make right judgment of the best things, or to withstand the temptations & vexatious assaults of the evil one; and although a man be thus destitute where the holy Spirit is wanting, yet there can be no expectation of his company, till a deep sense both of its want and worth affect the heart, to the rendring the soul capable of setting a valuable estimation of its company.

Secondly, For its obtaining, Get longings of heart after its supply; breathings and pantings from a sense of its want, hastens its coming; a soul that goeth Sadly up and down all the day long, Sick as it were of Love, for its frequent visits to revive comfort and strength; and to discover its own wants, and the tempters wiles; making the soul taller by head and shoulders, then those temptations that frequently attend it, saying with *David, As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks; so panteth my soul after thee O God: My soul thirsteth for the living God, when shall I come and appear before thee?* Or be filled with supplies from thee. *Psal.* 42. 1, 2.

Thirdly, For its obtaining, Make humble supplications to the Father for it; not only sick of love with the Spouse; but also panting and thirsting with *David*, yet rests not here, but is again and again upon its knees, with humble hearty supplications to God, even the Father; like the thirsty traveller, that going from Fountain to Fountain, from means to means, till he get what his soul travelleth after: when Jesus Christ were about to leave the Disciples, this was one of the last Legacies he gave them; *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* John 14. 16. *If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much*

much more shall your heavenly Father, give the holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke 11. 13.

In the second place, we may offer three Directions, in order to the sure keeping the holy Spirits company, or holding the constant fellowship, and dear inward intimate familiarity with so happy a companion.

First, A constant withstanding the beginnings of all evil.

Secondly, A ready compliance with new motions to all good.

Thirdly, A retaining in the heart, a high value of its company.

First, A *constant* withstanding the beginnings of all evil; is that which will wonderfully engage the Spirits company; when you crush sin in its least and first motion. Now the dearest of Gods Children are liable to temptation, and it is not their sin to be tempted to sin, Jesus Christ was tempted to sin, their sin lieth in closing with the temptation; but if instead of closing with it, you do in the Spirits strength constantly oppose it: mistake me not here, I pray you, a constant opposing sin, doth not intend less then these three things.

First, A firm withstanding the very first least motion, even a glance as it were, at the eye ear or thought to sin; *Abstain from all appearance of evil.* 1 Thes. 5. 22.

Secondly, As the first least motion, so in all cases and conditions, whether the temptation set upon you when you are full or hungry, sick or well, strong or weak, rich or poor, in affliction or out of affliction, it will be coming with new assaults in all conditions, waiting to kill you by a *Goliah* or *Bathsheba*, temptations more piercing, or more pleasing;

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[*Constant*] intends a withstanding here.

Thirdly, *Constant* intends continual; *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of life.* James 1.12. Rev. 2. 10.

Secondly, A second help to retain the holy Spirit, may be this; A ready compliance with new motions to all good; it is as proper for the holy Spirit to be prompting the heart to good if hearkned to, as for the fire to give heat, waiting upon the soul in every season, whether of rejoycings or weepings, whether of doing of Gods will or suffering for his name; still to be putting such as wait upon it into some such action as tends to their enlargment heaven-ward; but it must be quietly and silently heeded, that when it saith, *Seek my face*; the answer may be, *Thy face will I seek.* Great care and fear therefore must be had, that we neither grieve it, by not hearing what it saith, or not doing what it bids; nor yet quench or lightly esteem those gracious services it prompts us to.

Thirdly, A third Help may be this; A retaining in the heart a high value of its company; this is the way to keep, and to be richly encreas'd with the company of the holy Spirit; it cannot dwell where it is not valued at the highest rate; and that because ignorance of its worth and work, incapacitates the soul to high expectations, being ignorant both of the ability and delight, that essentially abides in the holy Spirit, to be greatning in the heart *things to come*, and lessening in the heart *things present*. Christ Jesus could not in one place, do many mighty works, because of their unbelief; the low and mean esteem of him, lessened their expectation from him. Now the *Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*; We are therefore called upon to be *filled with the Spirit*; and

if

if we *live in it, to walk after it, being strengthened with its might in the inward man,* to a full understanding the deep things of God: Labour therefore, praying over this, to retain in your hearts an high value of its company. *Amen.*

CHAP. XXIX.

Treating of Spiritual Ignorance of our everlasting condition; and five Scriptures tending to reducement from carnal security; and three special Causes of such a damning Decay.

SIGN. XXIX.

WHen you are so Ignorant of your Spiritual standing, that you know not whether you grow or decay.

This is not only a Sign of great Decay, but a prediction of a speedy fall, or total throwing off those holy badges by which a Christian is known from other men, such being of a *Laodicean* spirit, neither hot nor cold, yet *say they are rich and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing*; Being in a besotted, careless state, not minding when they do well or ill; when Professors come to this pass, they grow useless and fit for nothing but to be laid aside; for were such hot, that is, zealous, active, and lively they were fit for encouragement; and were they cold, that is, quite dead, they were to be plucked up by the roots, and cast into the fire: now this sort of Peoples ignorance is a very high crime, it being premised, that their ignorance of their standing, growing or declining in hea-

heavenly things, doth not come upon them for want of Gospel means, allowed on Gods part in order to their being fruitful; but that under sufficient allowance in order to their growth, they prove empty, dry, and huskish; yea and such, that were otherwise in the days of their first Espousal: but length of time in Gospel-standing, for want of due care to observe Gospel-ends, they have by little and little entertained Spiritual slumber, and so lose their stomack to, and relish of the true use and powerful end.

Means from God to them hath been so long continued, and so by long custom in his service, come as his people come, sit before him as his people do, and hear his word day by day, but do it not, or live not like it, having a *form of Godlyness; but denying the power thereof*, viz. The spiritual end designed by God in giving the form, being not lifted up to, provokes God to complain against such of old, *The Oxe knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Masters crib, but* Israel *doth not know, my people do not consider; though I have nourished and brought them up, yet they understand not that I taught* Ephraim *to go, taking him by the arms; but he knew not that I had healed him, though strangers devoured his strength, yet he knew it not, and though gray hairs were here and there upon him, yet he knew not.* Hos. 7. 9. Nay some were grown to that pass in spiritual slumbers, that even under judgments they knew not how it was with them. *Isa.* 42. 25. *He hath poured upon* Jacob *the fury of his anger, and strength of battel; and it hath set them on fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.* By all this we may see, that some were so ignorant of their spiritual standing under plentiful means, that they knew not whether they grew or decayed, though it is apparent, the decay was great, they knew not how

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it went with them: At such a loss may Professors be in their heaven-born-state, that while they are objects of pity and sorrow of heart to growing Christians, that behold their decay; yet all makes not for their awakening, but still they think it well with them, and that they have need of nothing, though blind and naked.

Now the Causes why persons under Gospel means, grow to this senseless pass in their spiritual estate; may be these three.

First, Carnal security in an evil time.

Secondly, Contentment with out-side Christianity.

Thirdly, Not being conversant about things to come.

First, Carnal security of hereafter Glory; which consists in a kind of confidence of Glory to come, without certain care of being in that way through which Glory is promised, It is such a state as promiseth safety to it self, and yet lives a careless life; when the children of *Dan* went to [illegible]k them an inheritance, they come to *Laish*, and found the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless after the manner of the *Zidonians*, quiet and secure; this proves such an advantage to them, that they take their City, burn it with fire, and upon the ruins thereof, build themselves an Inheritance. *Judges* 7. 1. Clearly noting, how dangerous a state some manner of security is; *When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.* 1 Thes. 5. 3. It seems in that good mans time, there was some that had high thoughts of hereafter Glory, yet should meet with disappointment, and their expectations come to nothing, though they might cry, as in *Jeremiahs* time, *Peace, peace*, yet peace there was none;

like

like the old world in *Noahs* time; *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* in *Lots* time; *They eat, they drank, they builded, they planted until the day that* Noah *entred into the Ark*; and *Lot* left *Sodom*, being under such kind of security, as no awakening word would warn them, till at last Destruction ruins them. We have the like instance from Jesus Christ, speaking of the last days, *I say to you, many shall come from the East, and West, and sit down with* Abraham, Isaac, *and* Jacob, *in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness.* May we not tremble to read this text, with self-reflection, that from the East and West, such as in all probability never had the Tythe of that means we have had, neither heard nor seen what we have heard and seen; yet to their measure had walked so like what they had heard, and what they had seen, that they shall be counted worthy by the Lord to sit with *Abraham* and *Isaac*, in the Kingdom, and the Children of the Kingdom cast out; namely, Such as had his Name and Ordinances among them, making visible show of his Religion, and promised themselves lack of nothing, because they would cry Lord, Lord, and were great nominal Christians, pleasing themselves in giving Christ good words, and think none shall be saved so soon as they, they being beset with such salvation priviledges. *Mat.* 7. 22, 23. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophecied in thy Name, and cast out Devils? Then will I say, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you; Let none therefore trust in lying words, which cannot profit, saying, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these, that ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; then will I cause you to dwell safely.* Jer. 7. beginning.

But alas how few lay to heart, the great good Salvation, and deliverance from the great hurt Damnation, eyeing with all trembling the road way in which God will both give the one, and with-hold the other; surely, surely, this carnal security, the souls damning sin, would never so possess persons, rocking them asleep, did they but withall diligence consider, that security of all kinds about hereafter Glory, without these marks of hearty designing, and actual endeavouring the new creatures life, in the measure called for, as attainable, and to be attained in the Scripture of truth, nothing being more evident, then that such make it their whole business, to be conversant about those soul-searching texts that speak out salvation by Christ Jesus, upon no less terms, then hearty designing, with actual endeavouring to live like Christ Jesus. in Scripture conformity to his will; I shall beg of God there may be by them that read this, these five following Scriptures duely weighed, which with the help of his grace, may serve as a deliverance, or tend to the rouzing up of the soul from this damning sin of carnal security.

The first is, *Rom.* 8 10. *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life,* or alive, *because of,* or unto *righteousness.* 2 Cor. 5.17. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold all things are become new.* Gal. 5. 24. *And they that are Christs, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* 1 John 2. 6. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.* Chap. 3. 3. *And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* Doth not these great Scriptures with one mouth, tell you the high road way to hereafter Glory, and prohibit any man from daring to promise him-

ſelf the ſame upon any other terms, or in any other way; wherefore my brethren, ſeeing that ye, or if you look for ſuch things, be diligent that *ye may be found of him in peace, without ſpot and blameleſs.* 2 Pet. 3. 14.

Secondly, A ſecond Cauſe of perſons being ſo ſenſeleſs, is, Contentment with out-ſide Chriſtianity; that is, frequent in the performance of thoſe Services that relate to the worſhip of God, but the thing deſigned by God to be reached after and obtained, is not purſued. It is evident both from Scripture and Experience, that perſons have been and are frequent in hearing Sermons, in Prayer, in Reading, in Faſting, and ſuch like performances, yet they remain very carnal and unmortified. Now Gods gracious End in giving ſuch ſpiritual priviledges to perſons, being by him deſigned to beget them to his ſpiritual likeneſs, and his End not brought about, muſt needs argue ſuch, not, or little further then out-ſide performances, contenting themſelves with their Services ſo done, that leaves three parts of four yet to do; for what pleaſure can God take in thoſe, that after long ſtanding under the opportunities of getting both inward and outward excellency, in that that makes Chriſtianity honourable, while they ſtill remain as fruitleſs as the Fig Tree, having a great ſhow at diſtance, and nothing but leaves at hand: Doth not Jeſus Chriſt in ſo many words except againſt ſuch, as not rightly qualified for his Kingdom. *Mat.* 5. 20. *But I ſay to you, except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* Their righteouſneſs will not do, and yet they are known to be a People much in prayer, Faſting and giving Alms, which are in themſelves good things, and yet they

not accepted of God, but for all this his Woes goeth out against them? May it not be feared, that hundreds in our days, content themselves with scarce going thus far in outward acts, yet retain a strong opinion that all shall be well with them hereafter; as though such confidence of being saved, as they that act it are content with, whuld content God; but let not such deceive themselves: and they may find that confidence about hereafter safety, not being acted by penitent subjects, whose hearts can witness a through change, will return to themselves back again, charged with presumption, notwithstanding all their outward performances: And it is most sure, as hath been premised in the last *Sign*, that the holy Spirit bears not witness with such spirits, that they are Gods Children, and that because while they remain thus content with out-side Christianity, Reformation reacheth not the heart; and then is a wanting that awful reverence of God and of Christ within, that commands without, the tongue so to talk, the eyes so to look, the hands so to act, the feet so to walk in the likeness of God, as to be truly deemed his workmanship; *Ye are our Epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men; forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to the Epistle of Christ.* But we shall leave this to consideration, and so pass to the third and last Head.

Thirdly, Persons are so senseless of their spiritual estate, by not being conversant about things to come: Now things to come are reduceable in special to these four heads; Death, Judgment, Salvation, Damnation: all which are matters (not of show) but of certainty, and may be called the four last things, which every man ought to make his four first things, that he furnisheth his heart withall, because indeed they are Religions great cause, and bounds; Heavens great

great Argument to call us to duty, our great Argument to ſubmit to Heavens call. And as theſe hath more or leſs force upon the heart, they may be more or leſs read in the life; the worſt of men whoſe conſciences are not ſeared, will be found under ſome awakenings, by but reflecting here, now and then, ſo forceable are they, where in the loweſt ſenſe but believed; Now that perſons, not being converſant about theſe mighty matters, prepares way to ſpiritual ſenſeleſsneſs, is very evident; and thrreſore when God complains of his peoples unequal walking, he either aſſigus it to their negligence here, as the cauſe they ſo walk, or ſeeks to poſſeſs them with remembrance here, as a moſt quickning remedy. *Deut.* 8. 5. *Thou ſhalt alſo conſider in thine heart, that as a man chaſteneth his Son, ſo the Lord thy God chaſteneth thee*; and the reaſon of this is given by God himſelf as an argument moſt ſtrong. *verſe* 26. *I fed thee with Manna in the Wilderneſs, which thy Fathers knew not, that I might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good at thy* latter end; (mark that) at thy latter end. *Chap* 32. 15. *But* Jeſurun *waxed fat, and kicked, then he forſook God which made him, and lightly eſteemed the Rock of his Salvation*; you ſee here *Iſrael*, , ſet not a value on making God his ſafety, but waxed wanton, and forgot who had formed him; now the moſt reduceable means we find urged is, *verſe* 29. thus, *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, and would conſider their* latter end: God bemoaneth them with deſire they would look before them, intimating that would they but look upon hereafter, they would live after another rate here; pertinent to this is, that *Prov*, 5. 11, 12, 13. *And thou mourn at* laſt, *when thy fleſh and thy body are conſumed*; *and thou ſay, now have I hated inſtruction, and my heart deſpiſed reproof, and obeyed not the voyce of*

my teachers, nor incline my ear to them, that instructed me; because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with the stroak, and then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Job 36. 18. Doth not all these Scriptures show the miserable state of such, as are not conversant about things to come; and how impossible it is to be reformed while they remain strangers to these great considerations. Now on the contrary, what more contributes to a spiritual growth, then hourly Communion about these mighty matters? No considerations being of a more mortifying force then Grave considerations. 2 *Cor.* 5. 10. *For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad: knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we perswade men.* This holy Apostle no sooner treats of Judgment, as his Doctrine, but to awaken and perswade from its terror, is his Application: also Jesus Christ to deter men from evil, and to compose them to good, gives such awakening Items as these, *If thy right offend* part with it, *rather then be cast into Hell-fire; where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched:* Three times together doth he in that 9th. *Chapter* of *Mark*, labour to rivet upon the hearers what misery is to come, and by the worm and fires being, notes certainty and by the worms gnawing, and fires burning, notes its its misery; and by the worms not dying, and the fires not being quenched, notes its eternity. Who would not cry at this? Cry out with *David*; *Oh God my flesh trembleth because of thee, for I am afraid of thy Judgments*: Christ Jesus his three-fold repetition seems plainly to show us what great aptness there is in every body to loose the Spiritual force of such mighty matters; they being the proper object only of a live-

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ly faith, that looks at things to come, with ſuch eſtimation as procures an inward trembling before God, to take one ſtep aſide from God.

But alas, alas, How many be there that ſtop the mouth of conſcience all they can from ſpeaking of this State to come, and will not endure to hear of the Grave, or Judgment, Salvation, or Damnation, though ſuch as will not endure the bitter of theſe things here, cannot enjoy the beſt of them hereafter? It is living now in a holy awe of them here, that will make us live above the fear of them hereafter: content not your ſelves then for a thouſand Worlds, at any diſtance from daily communion with the things to come; talk with them face to face, as a man talks with his friend, and go aſide often from all other buſineſs, into your cloſet, or garden, field, or wilderneſs, nay, into any ſolitary place on purpoſe to talk with the Grave, how ſhortly you muſt put off your cloaths (or outward garments) & never more put them on, ſaying with *Job*, *My foundation is in the duſt; if I wait, the grave is my houſe, I have made my bed in darkneſs; and ſaid to corruption thou art my Father, and to the worm thou art my Mother, and my Siſter.* Job 17. 13, 14. Conſider what you read, and ſo paſs to the 30*th*. Sign of dying to Godlyneſs; and the Lord give his bleſſing, *Amen.*

CHAP. XXX.

Shewing the miserable, estate of such as after longer acquaintance with Christ, are less in love to him; with six Causes of this Decay.

SIGN. XXX.

When increase of time in Christs acquaintance, worketh decrease of Affection to Christs Company.

Is this the case of any, or rather is it not the case of many, that began well, and promised fair for holding on well, as though all the world with its allurements should not hinder them from ending well, that in their early or first love were so pleasantly affected with Christs acquaintance, that their meat and their drink was to be with him at his feet hearing his word; and if he walked in the Garden they must be there, if in the Mount of Olives they must be there, if in a solitary place they must be with him, in no condition disliked with his company, content with him in fulness, and in scarcity, content with him in favours, and in frowns, still happy while leaning on Jesus's breast, some leaving father and mother to come to him, others leaving house and land to come to him, their trade of Tent-making, fishing, nay having found such a pearl, sell all to buy this field; and what shall we have, or how be filled with enjoyment of thee? *We have forsaken all to follow thee.* Mat. 19. 27. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss; for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for

for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, &c. *Phil.* 3. 7, 8, 9. Now I go away to him that ſent me, and becauſe I tell you theſe things, ſorrow hath filled your hearts: They were ſo dearly affected with Chriſts company, they could not bear to hear of his perſonal withdrawing, though he tells them it is beſt for them, they ſhould be for a little time without him, yet at this, ſorrow fills their heart. *John* 16. By this giving any to underſtand, that they could joyfully cry with *David*, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And whom have I on earth in compariſon of thee?*

Tell me Chriſtians, you that can experience the new birth, and know full well how it was with you in the days of your eſpouſal, were you not then raviſhed with Chriſts love? Even ſick of love, filled with content to be about him, wondring every day at this grace, counting no pains much, no coſt enough to ſerve ſuch a lover, *under the ſhadow of whoſe wings, you took ſweet delight*; but how is it now; *You did run well, did any hinder you, that you ſhould not ſtill obey the truth? Or with the righteous hold on your way; and having clean hands grow ſtronger and ſtronger.* Job 17. 9.

Is any of theſe forementioned decays come upon you, what mind have you to aſſembling, are you indifferent or no? Tell the truth, ſearch your hearts, and ſpeak your hearts: Do you love to hear Sermons now or no? Is it, or is it not like the *morning dew to you?* Are you weary or no in your pureſt worſhip? Is your delight ſtill to be with God in cloſet ſervices? Have you good will and great longings to be often at Chriſts Table, through faith eating with him and drinking with him, of his body which is meat indeed, and of

his

his blood which is drink indeed? What mind have you to prayer? Do ye with delight *pour forth your souls before him at all times, as your refuge?* What is your delight to reading the holy *Scriptures?* Are they your *meditation day and night?* Can ye say, *I had fainted for thy Salvation had I not hoped in thy word?* Search into your state, and let your condition be what it will, pass right judgment upon it, whether ye die more or less, or grow more or less; to have true knowledge of your state, is the way to better it, if decayed, this may remedy it, if growing this may encrease it; Oh then stand not still in a conceit, it is well or ill with you, but be at a certainty, how it is with you, *examine your selves, prove your selves, know you not that Christ Jesus is in you except ye be reprobates.* 1 Cor. 13. 5.

Come dear friends and let us walk on to *Emmaus*, and talk together by the way, of all things that have happened of late, namely, since we did believe; have ye a hankering after new things; would you now be gadding up and down, after divers and strange Doctrines? How is your heart affected with, or Afflicted to hear of others Misdoings? *Doth horror take hold of you; because any leave Christs law?* Doth your souls weep in secret places for others pride? Are you astonished to hear that such a one is turned again *to his farm, another to his merchandize?* One gone back to *Egypt* again, another willing to stay in the Wilderness, and many most unwilling if it prove costly, either to pass over *Jordan*, or by *Jericho*, though it be Gods great road way to *Canaan*: Remember how it was once with you, enquire how it is with you now; when you meet one another, is your talk heavenly or earthly? What do ye savour most? What design seek ye most to carry on? In all company who are ye

for,

for, the world that is, or the world to come? Do ye ask one another when you meet, what trade goeth forward with you most? Are ye telling meekly and frequently each other, what God hath done for your souls? What yearnings of heart is in you after these solemn assemblies? Do you count it worthy your time to be often there? Do you go and pray, and pray before you go, that you may dutifully meet God, and he profitably meet you? Doth Christs eye constrain you to come thither or the Churches eye? When you are hindred, what is your fear? How is your care? Can you be well content to be lightly absent, if the Church will be content with your absence? Doth the Decay in Christs House, or in your house trouble you most? Can you quietly bear Decay in Christs Spiritual House, while you keep from Decay in your temporal House? Can you see afflictions pierce the sides of some bitterly, and you not weep with them? Was it thus with you once, were not others sorrows your tears? Did you not delight to mourn with the mourner, and rejoyce with the singer? Are you now less able then formerly to withstand temptations? Will a small offence make you so impatient as to commit great sin? Is Satan almost at every little turn too hard for you? Are you baffled quickly now with every little blow? Are you so dry and barren of the Spirits waterings, that now every touch takes you? How is it with you when troubles are upon you? Are you more or less then you were wont to be in prayer? Whether is your care now most to know afflictions cause or cure? What way tends the strivings of your heart most, when Gods stroak is upon you? Would you part with the Rod upon any terms, or undergo it longer, to have it sanctified the surer? Doth affliction mend you or make you worse?

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How are you when the Rod is gone? Can you truly say with *David*, *Before I was afflicted I went astray*, and as truly say, *But now I have learned to keep thy word?* What are your thoughts of *Egypt*, the Land you were redeemed from? Would you go thither again? Is your old sin, or sins in any measure pleasant to you again? Are you taken with the thoughts of your baseſt Lovers, whose paths led you to the gates of Hell? Doth the great work of Mortification go forward or backward? Doth sin get head or looſe head in you? Are you not indeed wholly ignorant as to your spiritual estate, whether you grow or decay.

But last of all, and most of all? Doth encrease of time in Christs acquaintance, work decrease of affection to Christs company? Ah Lord God is it come to this, have you suffered so many things in vain! What? Love Christ Jesus less! whom you can never love enough, and once thought so? Doth long acquaintance with such a Friend, procure desires of his absence? God forbid: Would you not walk with him now, and talk with him now? yea take sweet counsel together, as you were wont to do? Do you savour the things of the earth so much, and the things of Heaven so little, that now your Lords company is burthensome? Can you not go with him, run with him, Fast with him, Pray with him, weep with him, yea and bleed with him? Hath he not done all this for you? *He was made sin for us, that knew no sin; wounded for our transgressions; pierced for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed* 2 Cor. 5. 21. Isa. 35. 5. But I shall proceed briefly to six Causes of this great Decay.

First,

First, Forgetfulness of that perishing condition Christ found us in at first acquaintance: *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood; I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, live; then washed I thee with water, yea, I throughly washed away thy blood, and anointed thee with oyl.* Zech. 16. 6, 9, compared with Chap. 36. 11. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe your selves in your own sight, for your iniquities and abominations.* Here by comparing our estate with Israels estate, we may read our danger with Israels danger, who being apt to forget the condition God found them in, and redeemed them from, are charged to remember *their own evil ways*: This Remembrance was that, that wrought such high admiration in St. *Paul.* 1 Tim. 1. 12, 13. *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, that he counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.* Clearly noting, that *Pauls* remembrance of Christs goodness to him in misery, encreased his esteem of Christs mercy.

Secondly, A second Cause may be this; Actual withdrawing from that wonted familiarity we use to have with Christ; once if it were well with us, he must know it, and be praised for it; if it were evil with us, he must be told of it; and at the least absence, you could cry with the Spouse, *Tell me O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest and causest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside, from the flocks of thy companions.* Cant. 1. 17. Thus in a holy friendly intimacy claims his company; if now such discover strangeness to him in being strangers to his

his Fold; in a word, at every Christians service, now seldome, though once often; thus neglecting the means of encrease, must needs cause decrease.

Thirdly, The third Cause may be this; Deep declinings to heart-acquaintance; The watch now over the heart is not so strict as once; it was so tender in times past, that every comer in and goer out, must be under strict examination, who they were for, whether or no they went Christ Jesus's errand; but now the door of the heart is set open too too often, at hours too unseasonable, for reasons too slender, to the entertaining many a strange face that never was wont to come there, since the King of Glory had taken his possession; for this *Jeremiah* complains against *Jerusalem. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?* They *kept not their heart with all diligence, knowing that out of it are the issues of life*; But trusting it too much were deceived and turned aside thereby.

Fourthly, A fourth Cause may be this, Decaying in love to Christs Children; once your chief delight was with the Saints, and especially those that excelled in virtue; now daily decaying in your love to them, and acquaintance with them: This Christ Jesus maketh an unerring reason, *He that loveth his Brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.* 1 John 2. 10. *If any man say, I love God, and hates his Brother, he is a lyer; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* Chap. 4. 20. Plainly asserting, the impossibility of loving the greater, if we love not the lesser; so that to what degree there is decay in one, there is the same in the other.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, The fifth Cause may be this; Encrease of affection to perishing things; At your first acquaintance with Christ, the world and its offers was contemned by you, now it is esteemed; you had once a holy carelesness for the things of this life, now an unholy carefulness for them; then you sate at Jesus's feet, hearing his word, but now, cumbered with much serving; *Love not the world nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*: Meaning whosoever *loves the world* at such a rate as to be more thoughtful after its vanities then Heavens excellencies; *For the love of Money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Tim. 6. 10.

Lastly, A sixth Cause may be this; The withdrawings of the holy Spirit, that was once pleased, and did then visit you often; but now is grieved, and visits you seldom; that once helped you much against temptations, laying for dead the deeds of the body, now lets you alone to be beaten and baffled with every evil motion, and this as the effect of the Spirits withdrawing, whose work where ever it is, being to greaten the esteem of Jesus Christ, and foil temptations of every kind, if not discouraged, grieved and hindred, for fear of which are those high Christian Precepts given, not to *vex it*, *quench it*, or *grieve it*; and that because, as our natural body without life is void of action, so without the holy Spirit is a Christian man dry and barren, at best but like the Fig-tree, something only in shew, yet cursed by Jesus Christ for want of fruit: When the Apostle *Jude* comes to speak of some, that in the last days should

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turn Mockers walking after their own ungodly lusts, mark how they are characterized out; *These be they who separate themselves, sensual*, Having not the Spirit; *Jude* reckons them among the *Sodomites* for filthiness, calls them Raging Waves, Wandring Stars, Murmurers, Complainers, worse then natural Bruit-beasts; and the sum of all, As being destitute of the Spirit. In the midst of all *Davids* languishing for fear of so high a loss, is not this one of his most bitter cries? *Cast me not away from thy presence, and* Take not thy holy Spirit from me. Psal. 51. 11.

CHAP. XXXI.

Setting forth the great aptness in persons, to form to themselves a Devotion, and from thence, promise themselves life and freedom while they live under sins Dominion; with six evident marks of a right conviction of sin, and conversion from sin, with the Causes assigned of Declension in after time from continual hating of sin.

SIGN XXXI.

When great sins seem smaller, and small sins seem none at all.

It is one of the first work of Gods holy Spirit upon a Convert, to set before him the sinfulness of sin, and the wrath due to him for the same, till a sight of this sin is dead, in the acts and effects of it upon transgressors; for while the Prince of darkness rules sin, though it lives and grows, is under a vail, blindness having

having covered the understanding of the sinner, so that it becomes habitual, and the habit of it takes away the feeling of conscience towards it, so that the Scripture ranks such under this mark, as dead in sins and trespasses; being past feeling, fear to offend, or care to please their Creator; and yet at the same time under some kind of awakenings; now and then have some apprehensions of Death and Judgment to come, and in the outward skirts of it, have a kind of belief that there is a Heaven and Hell for reward and punishment; and at the same time form to themselves some kind of devotion, as best pleaseth, and costeth least from hence, promising to themselves life and freedom hereafter from that wrath that is to come; though at the same time live under the dominion of such sins as is most grateful to them; and because of some good meaning or formal prayer and confession, which they now and then put up to God in the words of Christs people, while barren of the Spirit of Christs people; yet herewith take content, while they use *Davids* words of confession, conclude themselves under *Davids* Spirit of contrition. All this while Satan that he may hold them the more firm, from right conviction of sin, and right conversion from sin, doth allow them to excell in some common acts of Justice to the second Table of Gods Law; and from hence they conclude their state safe, though they can Swear, be Drunk, Lie, Cheat, live in Covetousness, envying, Malice, Pride, Back-biting, Whispering Surmising, &c. and that because they now and then do these things, yet are they good Church-men and do ask God every night forgiveness; and are told in Scripture, that they are to pray for pardon of sin, and that he which believeth that Jesus is the Son of God shall be saved, and that Christ died for sinners, and they are sure

they are ſinners, and no where exempted, that they know of from his mercy; for Jeſus came into the world on purpoſe to ſeek and ſave what was loſt.

May it not be feared thouſands thus content themſelves with onely outſide reformation, remembring that *David*, *Peter*, and others in Scripture ſinned, and the beſt of men living, have their failings; and its but the ſame with them, and they do heartily beg forgiveneſs of God, though its true they cannot leave their ſins, yet can ſay God be merciful to me a ſinner.

Now it will be needful here to ſhew the diſtinction between ſinner and ſinner: Some ſpots though really ſpots, yet are not the ſpots of Gods enemies; its one thing to ſin under a Covenant of grace (through infirmity) and another thing to ſin out of the Covenant (through impenitence) one with his will, the other againſt his will; one ſeeks the ſin; the other, the ſin ſeeks him; the one moſt careful of Gods eye, the other, if at all, onely careful of mans eye; the one goes a mourner to the grave, that ever he ſinned againſt ſuch love and grace as the Goſpel hath made known; the other, never mourns for ſin, but as provoked at the feeling of the puniſhment; the one is more afraid of the Hell in ſin, then the Hell after ſin; the other the contrary; the one thirſts after the ſpirit of juſtification, the other wiſheth, but its like a wanton Beggar, for the advantage of juſtification; the one cares not what becomes of him here, ſo he may live with God hereafter; the other cries, who will ſhew us any good here? The one hath reſpect to every command of God; the other picks and chuſes, believes as his rulers believe, or ſuch a Biſhop or Learned man, or great Landlord believes, and what is moſt in faſhion, that moſt pleaſes him; his Religi-

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on lieth in avoiding the Cross, and running with the Stream. The one thinks nothing too costly for Christ, the other thinks that Religion best that costeth least. In a word, one loves the Lord Jesus in all his Offices as King, Priest, and Prophet, to rule him as well as save him; the other would be contented to love, as a Jesus to save, but will not endure him as a King to rule.

Having premised this about sin in the General, we shall now speak of it under this Sign, as it respects such as once thought small sins great, now think great sins small, look at small ones as if they were none at all. This certainly, is a sign of Decay in Godliness; the least Sign against him, being great enough without the mercy of God, (if persisted in) to weigh us down to Hell, cannot therefore in it self be little; but its very possible for a Christian that once had a Conscience so tender, that every little touch did greatly grieve; yet may in process of time come to such a state of love or liking to sin, that he can now easily swallow down that for which he went mourning all the day long. Till the Commandment came to the Apostle *Paul*, he was alive in his own estimation, and did verily think, he did God good service, in making havock and spoil in the Church of God, being zealously mad against all that called on the name of Jesus, and yet at the same time was in Gods account a Blasphemer, Persecutor, as himself, in the account he gives of himself, after his conversion, did acknowledge himself; for when once the Commandment came, and sin appeared exceeding sinful, and the Wrath of God appeared as the reward of it, he then lay low in his own eyes; the chief of sinners and least of Saints. Often saith the Prophet have I heard of thee, by the hearing of the Ear, which is the case of thousands in *England*; and his fear they are

raught by the precept of men. But now saith the Prophet, *Mine Eyes have seen thee, and therefore do I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* I have seen thee in thy greatness as a sin hating God; and in thy goodness as a sin pardoning God. Therefore do I abhor my self. Now woe is me, I see now I am a man of unclean lips; this is the effects of the holy Spirits work, leading the sinner to behold the hands, and side of Jesus, pierced with the Nails and Spear. Now sin appears sinful, and Hell following after where damned Worms shall never die: This made *David* to walk heavily, and cry out upon his awakening, *Have mercy upon me O God, according to the multitudes of thy tender mercies, blot out all mine Iniquities, and me from all my sin.* It is very possible for Christians to loose this first heat, relish, and savour of the new Birth-beginning, that once was as a Jewel of great price. And this ordinarily comes to pass through negligence to maintain the first Life-principle they sucked from the Grace of God at its first entertainment. And did not then (let me ask experience) our hearts burn within us, in these six particulars.

1. Did we not see then our selves the greatest of sinners? Did we not think Hell little enough for our punishment, the Ground too good to bear us to walk on, and the Air too good to allow us to breath in, and every bit of Bread much more then we deserve? Did not Scales fall as it were from our eyes? Were not our opinion of our selves, changed from wealth to woe? We that a few days before, preached peace to our Souls, and thought our state as good as any in our Neighbourhood, though we knew not how to weep, that had made our Lord to weep. Yet now where ever we came, wept bitterly, and all our talk was of our undone estate out of Christ; never well

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but when we were breathing out our grief, that ever we grieved God. Was it not but the other day, that one *Saul* was going to *Damascus* with Commission, whersoever he found any of the Disciples of Jesus, he must bring them bound to *Jerusalem*; and did he not hold the Raiment of these that stoned *Stephen*; and zealous for the Law of the Fathers, and as touching its righteousnes blameless. But now his eyes being opened, he seeth himself a blasphemer, a persecutor, and sets his hope onely on *Jesus Christ that came into the World to save sinners.* 1 Tim. 1. 15.

But Secondly, Did not we then go often to God by prayer for yet a clearer sense of our sin still being Jealous it was not enough? Did we not then cry Oh! I am not wounded enough in my Spirit, for wounding my Saviours Spirit? Were we not then ready to highten, rather then lessen our sores? Methinks I hear you still crying out with your Espousal, Cry wo is me that ever I should offend such a Lord, such love, such a matchless love. I can never do enough for him, nor suffer enough for him; had I a thousand lives they were all too little to lay down at his feet? How early with God were we in Closset-prayer, early at the Sermon, early at visiting the Imprisoned. Now Spirit, Person, Purse, and all I am and have, is at the Lords Service. Now I feel such a weight upon my shoulders for my sins that nothing but the blood of Christ can hold me from sinking into Hell.

But Thirdly, Did we not then abhor our sin, or what we had done, and all occasions leading thereunto? Did not we then say with *David*, *my sin is ever before me*? Were not our black deeds in all company, and in all conditions most before our eies, following us as a hungry Wolf follows its prey? Were we not then as weary of our sin as of a long fit of sickness?

Did we not lothe the thoughts of that that had *Dalilah*? Were it not now our ſickneſs, and ſo in its own Colours beſet with the black threatnings of Gods great Plagues.

But Fourthly, Did we not then retain in our memory, a deep ſenſe of the Plagues due, for our ſin lothing our ſelves. Woe is me that ever I ſhould be ſuch a vile wretch, ſuch a Beaſt before the Lord; I now abhor my ſelf in duſt and aſhes, at the very thought and remembrance of my ſin; I do now ſee and wonder at that mercy of God that kept me out of Hell: Oh! It is Hell I do deſerve for my hainous crimes, as none knows more of me, then I do of my ſelf; ſo none can think worſe of me, then I think of my ſelf, admiring the mercy of God, and give my teſtimony, that ſurely none but a God could have born with me thus long. Oh! That ever I ſhould ſpend my precious time, ſubſtance, and ſtrength to ſerve ſuch filthy luſts; I now ſee it is better for me to be a *door-keeper in the houſe of God, then to dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

But Fifthly, Did we not then ſee ſo much of ſin, ſelf, and wrath, that we covenanted for ever to live a Mourner for what before we had done; that as we had made it our trade, and had got the very habit of ſin. So now we ſhould get the habit of ſorrow; not as too many ſorrowful, onely while convictions are ſtrong; but clothed with the ſtate of ſorrow, from month to month, and year to year, paſſing of the time of our whole Pilgrimage in trembling and fear, like *Ezekiels* mourners that God had pardoned. *Chap. 7. verſe 16. But they that eſcape of them ſhall eſcape; yet to remain on the Mountains like Doves on the valleys, all of them mourning in the ſtate, as well as act, every one for his own iniquity.*

Laſtly,

Lastly, Did we not then covenant for ever to be thankful to God for our pardon? Did we not then think it little enough to be upon our knees praising this God to Eternity, that had saved us, and shewed us such mercy, when we were polluted to the lothing of our persons; and that at such a time, God should look upon us with such pittie? Did not this sense work us up to forget our sorrow, for joy that so goodly a man-child was born, the Lord of life formed in us. What Trouble, Pain, Loss, or Cross, had a voice to press the spirits to complain like this to praise, the joy of believing, being a transcendent joy. 1 *Pet.* 1. 8.

Object. But what is the Causes this frame is not now? Why! What is the matter that great sins seem small, and small none at all? Answer, These three appear to be Causes. 1. Ignorance how much God hates Sin. 2. Ignorance what Christ Jesus underwent for Sin. 3. Ignorance of the woeful effects of Sin.

First, Ignorance how much God hates Sin. This appears to every intelligible person, that will but consult Gods Method from the beginning of time, his glorious attribute of justice was still bent against sin; the first glorious price of his workmanship, whom he placed in the Garden of delight, who was undoubtedly Gods delight; for he beheld every thing that he had made good, much more man the Master-piece of all the rest; for in the Image of God made he him; Yet now for sin must be driven out of Paradice; the ground cursed for his sake, and in sorrow must he eat his bread; and from thence forward be a dying man, till he die, *Moses* the man of God, (with whom God the great Lord Almighty, talketh face to face,) and the very type of Jesus Christ: Yet must never have one

prayer answered, when a sin had but come in the way; though in other cases so prevalent, that with prayer he holds Gods hands. Yet now *O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; I pray thee let me go over to see* Jordan, *that goodly mountain, and* Lebanon, *but the Lord was wrath with me for your sakes, and would not hear me. And the Lord said to me, let it suffice thee, speak no more of this matter.* Deut. 3. 24, 25, 26. *Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate.* Jer. 44. 4. *For this cause God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie, that they all might be damned.* 2 Thes. 2. 11, 12.

But Secondly, Ignorance what Christ underwent for sin. Oh the bitter agony that it made him sweat as it were great drops of blood, trickling down his blessed Cheeks; his soul was exceeding sorrowfull, even unto death, his hair pulled off, his visage marr'd more then any mans, his face spit in, his hands and feet nailed to a Tree, a spear thrust through his side; and in the 33*d* year of his age, the prime age of a man, his precious life must be taken away, his blood shed a man of sorrows, and clothed with griefs all for sin, though he knew no sin, neither was guile ever found in his mouth; he paid dear for what we did, he must die that we may live; be curst that we may be blessed. Can we look upon this blessed Jesus, drinking this bitter cup, and think any sin small that laid such a weight on the Lord of Life.

Thirdly, Ignorance of the woefull effects of sin. What brought the flood? Was it not sin? What brought Fire and Brimstone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*? Was it not sin? What brought all the ten plagues upon *Egypt*? Was it not sin? What brings the mighty to the dust, but this Monster sin, Sicknesses,

nesses, Diseases, Sword, Plague, Fire, Famine. *Amos* 4. at large will tell us. What was the matter with *London* 1665. that more then sixty thousand of its inhabitants are carried captive to the Grave, while every street is filled with evening cries, bring out your dead, bring out your dead; in the morning walking well about streets, at night laid in the grave for worms to feed on; when we beheld in 1666. a Fire as from Heaven devour our dwellings, and consume that in a few hours, that many years cannot repair; while he that was rich yesterday, was a beggar to day, and not close with the Prophet, *The joy of our heart is ceased, our dance is turned into mourning; the crown is fallen from off our head, Woe unto us that we have sinned*, Lam. 5. 15, 16, This is the Monster, who can then look upon *London*, and think any sin small.

CHAP. XXXII.

Shewing the great aptness in Christians to be less affected with praises for a Tribe of mercies coming, and more afflicted to murmuring for a tithe of mercies going; with four Causes of this Decay.

SIGN. XXXII.

When your Tongue is frequent in complaining for lesser miseries, and silent in praising for greater mercies.

Oh! How apt are Christians to fall under this Decay, quickly apprehensive of that which goeth against the grain; the string of the heart easily wound upon

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its utmost height, yea beyond godly bounds in sorrow; *give me Children or else I die*; a ready accountant to complain what we want, and would have, or have in point of misery, and would be rid of; but at the same time so out of our account under a Christian consideration, that we think not of going into Gods sanctuary, and weighing our present state in his ballance; whether so much misery on the left hand is not overpoised with treble its mercies on the right hand; a tribe of mercies coming, less seen in their worth to raise the heart and tongue after a thankful frame, then a Tithe of mercies going; perhaps weep more for the removal of one Son, then the possession of ten Sons; big with trouble for a lesser loss, and yet at same time lean in thankfulness for greater gain. Good *David* was once out here, *Is the young man Absalom safe?* Now was *Absalom* in the height of rebellion, aiming at no less then the Crown, yet now *Joab*, *Abishai*, and *Ittai* whom I have made Captains over thousands to fight my Battels; when ye overcome, deal gently for my sake with the young man, even *Absalom*. The Battel is fought, the Mercy is obtained; for the victory goeth on *Davids* side; Messengers hasten with the tidings, every one ambitious who shall run first, and fastest. And the King sits in the gate waiting for their Message, and behold *Ahimaaz* the Son of *Zadock*, cometh and said, *all is well*, *falling down upon his face before the King*, *saying*, *Blessed be the Lord thy God which hath delivered the men*, *which did lift up their hand against my Lord the King*. Here is joyful tidings of a conquest calling for triumphant thankfulness. But at what height is *Davids* Tongue now in tune, *Is the young man Absalom safe?* That appeared more set upon his heart, then the Victory; for no sooner hath *Cushi* another messenger reported

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Absalom's death; but the victory is forgotten, and *Davids* greatest cause of joy at the mercy turned into greater sorrow, at the lesser misery; for the King was much moved, and went up to the Chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went thus, he said, *O my Son Absalom, my Son, my Son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee O Absalom, my Son, my Son,* 2 Sam. 18. 5. 21, 29, 32, 33. Is not this too too common among professors wherever we come, the place filled with complaining of want, or loss; our Tongue nimble at reporting our lesser miseries, while dumb at praising for greater mercies, our hands often lifted up in prayer for what we want; but seldom lifted up in praise for what we have.

How many signal mercies from evening till morning, and from morning till evening are scarce taken notice of; meat to eat, and an appetite to it, Cloaths to cover us, fire to warm us, a bed to rest us; and yet so bruitish, as not to see these mercies in their worth, till we see them in their want; how many nights under the shade of death, are we delivered from the sith of Death, and yet never the more thankful or fruitful next morning? a state of bodily health and strength for years together, and less concerned in its enjoyment, with care for a state of thankfulness; then if all were more debt, and merit, then clemency and mercy.

The Fowls of the Air, the Beasts of the field, the Fish of the Sea, must surrender up their breath to continue our breath, they uncloathed, that we may be cloathed; the tender Calf fetch'd from the stall; the young Lamb taken from the flock; the Turtle-Dove stript of its life, for a pampered, wanton, unthankful, unfruitful People. But what will be the end of all? *Who shall live when God doth this?* Namely

ly, Calls to an account, brings in the bill of Indictment.

Imprimis, For the abuse of Plenty, in the year of Plenty. *Item*, For Idleness. *Item*, For Wantonness. *Item*, For turning Riches into Pride. *Item*, For praying seldom, except under some sensitive loss. *Item*, For sitting down to feed upon Gods Creatures, and resting upon your Beds as do the Bruits. *Item*, For murmuring under Adversity. *Item*, For Dull-sightedness at what you abound with. *Item*, For Envy at your Brothers welfare. *Item*, For using your Tongue to carry Tales. *Item*, For taking up a report against your Neighbour, *Item*, For every omission of Good. *Item*, For every commission of Evil. *Item*, For your grand sin of unthankfulness, *&c.*

Ah Christians! What shall we plead in the great day of account, when this, and a thousand times more shall rise up in Judgment against us, for spending more of our Tongue and Time, in complaining of lesser miseries, then in praising for greater Mercies.

But what may be the Causes of this Decay? First, Counting without God. Secondly, Ignorance that the pulse of sense, beats higher then the pulse of faith. Thirdly, Ignorance that the state of a Christian on earth, is to be a thankful state. Fourthly, A not retaining in the heart, the due reward of past sins.

First, Counting without God. That is, when we measure our condition with what we would have it be, not asking counsel at the hand of God, is this or that condition best for me? Good *Agur* knew the deceitfulness of his own heart, and therefore durst not make any choice without God. *Two things have I desired of thee, deny me them not before I die, give me neither*

neither Poverty nor Riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord, or lest I be poor, and Steal, and take the name of my God in vain. Pro. 30. 8, 9. If the young Child may have its will, it will crave a knife, and therewith wound it self; Eat to Gluttony, Drink unto surfetting. Cry out against applying the plaster, or searching the Sore. How apt have we been to complain of that condition, that when once we had but gone into the sanctuary to see it, have then found it mercy, ending in thankfulness. The little Boy, while little, is very unwilling to learn his book, and will venter upon Correction for a Play-day: but when riper years are gone over his head; repines with repentance at the past-time so mispent. Oh! Its good to let God alone, to walk in his own Method, and take what he sends whether it be Physick or Cordial.

But Secondly, A second Cause is this, we know it not, but the Pulse of Sense beats higher then the Pulse of Faith; that is, we measure our condition by seeing, and not by believing *Abraham*'s sense, could not see the Son of the promise; but his faith could take the knife to slay the Lad for a sacrifice unto God. Sense would not let *Israel* go to *Canaan* through the Wilderness; but God saw that way the nearest, therefore faithful *Moses* chuses that way. Sense made *Rachel* cry, *give me Children, or else I die.* While Faith led old *Eli*, while made childless to cry, *It is the Lord let him do what seemeth him good.* Sense makes us angry at the Rod, though a Prison at the same time, is better then a Pallace. Sense led *Israel* to be angry at God, and murmur when they wanted bread and water, and dislike their Travel through so great and terrible a Wilderness, wherein were fiery

Ser-

Serpents and Scorpions, and Drought; but had Faith been predominant, it would have represented to them the goodliness of that way, because of the signal ends that was to ensue; out of a Rock of flint gusheth forth Water, and from Heaven is Mannah, Angels food rained, and the Red-Sea divided, and *Pharoah* and his host drowned; and above all *Israel* humbled, and their hearts proved, that God might do them good at their latter end, so that in a word, Faith measures that condition the most thankful condition, be it never so thornie, unpleasant and bitter to sense, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better Resurrection. *Heb.* 11. 35.

But Thirdly, A cause why we are more frequent in complaining of lesser miseries, then praising for greater mercies, is ignorance that the state of a Christian here on Earth, is to be a thankful state, that is, *in every thing to give thanks*. 1 Thes. 5. 18. This to sense in its Latitude, seems a hard Lesson. What? To thank God for Afflictions, for Poverty, for Sickness, for loss of Husband, Wife, Child, House, Land, what to have all in one bottom, and to sink at once into the bottom of the Sea, and yet thank God seems *Egyptian* bondage, and worse; but the Text is universal, *in every thing give thanks*; and the reason is as universal for every condition (on this side Hell is mercy, and therefore calls for thankfulness) *Moses* coming to *Pharaoh* with request that *Israel* might be enlarged, was mercy, though it tended at first to the enlargement of their bonds, yet it was in order to their freedom upon the most noble terms; had we never trouble here, we should never so long for rest hereafter. Good *Joshua* and *Caleb* still thought the best of Gods way with them, and *Job* when House, and

and substance, and Cattle, and Servants, and Children, and all was gone, sends in thankfulness, *Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and* BLESSED *be the name of the Lord.*

Fourthly, A fourth Cause of this Decay may be this, not retaining in the heart the due reward of past sins; that is, forgetting that anguish which under our first convictions we were bowed down with; when we felt the weight of our sins in their black and horrid aggravations, having past upon our selves the sentence of Death; and this followed by the Law of Life: crying out *Oh wretched sinner that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this Death, or dead body?* Were we not then as it were tied to a dead man, and compelled to draw him, and the stench of him up and down with us whersoever we went, being beset with *Ezekiels* roul, Lamentations, and mourning, and woe? Could we not then truly say with *David*, my sin is ever before me, and Hell coming after; and if in this Christless condition I die, I shall be damned to all Eternity. Did not this burden felt for sin, and feared for wrath, keep down the Spirit of complaining more for smaller miseries? And how would we then have been affected with thankfulness for the tythe of those mercies we now overlook? Its evident by Gods expostulation with *Israel* in *Ezekiels* time. *Chap.* 16. That this Symptom was upon them in a high degree, so that the Prophet for their reducing begins at the root, *Son of man, cause* Jerusalem *to know her abominations*; she hath forgotten her Father was an *Amorite*, and Mother an *Hittite*, and in the day she was born, she was cast out into the open field, to the lothing of her person, and when no eye pittied her, then said

I to her live; her extremity of misery, was my opportunity of mercy; thus her renown went forth among the nations; for she was beautiful through my comelineſs which I put upon her; but now *Jeſuron* waxeth fat, and kicked, and lightly eſteemed the rock of her Salvation, and as the in-let to all her ſin. *verſe* 22. She hath not kept in remembrance the days of her youth, when ſhe was naked and bare and polluted in her blood the Malefactor. Now ſentence is pronounced, and die he muſt for his tranſgreſſion, though once a Palace could not contain him, he ſwell'd ſo big with pride; Oh! Now any Cottage, yea corner of a Houſe top, yea a Dungeon will be wellcome, let him but dwell there with a pardon, thus he lies low under the ſenſe of a temporal death deſerved, and ſhall not we with ſelf-abhorrency, lie much lower, under the ſenſe of an eternal Death deſerved; When in my greateſt miſeries temporal, for which I droop and complain with the worm-wood and the Gall, then calling to remembrance, why am I not in Hell, makes that Tongue but now complaining, turned into Thankſgiving; *It is of the Lords mercies I am not conſumed, Praiſe ye the Lord*, Amen, Amen. Conſider what you read, and ſo paſs to the 33*d*. Sign of dying to Godlineſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Demonstrating what a precious Jewel Time is, how to be redeemed, proving it Gods work to give the Space, a Christians work to make the use. Shewing also what a dreadful loss, the loss of time is, with the Causes of this Decay, and Remedies for Recovery.

SIGN. XXXIII.

When your sense of the great worth of time is so small, that you are turned Prodigal.

It is essential, That every man should consider, that as God hath given him an excellent Nature, Wisdom and understanding to make his choice, having made him Lord over all Creatures, and a little lower then the Angels; he hath also appointed him a work and service, great enough to imploy those abilities, and hath also designed him to a state of life eternal, after this life is ended; unto which state he can onely arrive, by that work and service. And that nothing may be wanting on Gods part, to the accomplishing this great design, he hath and doth, give every man a time in this World, *a time so precious*, that on it depends ETERNITY. Time, in the space of it Gods, in the use of it Ours; for we must remember that we have a great work to do, many enemies to conquer, many evils to prevent, many dangers to run through, many difficulties to be mastered, and it may be, many Children or Friends to provide for,

and many diseases to cure, and which is most of all, to be found in all doing it so, that we may not go back in the accounts of Eternity. Now to have such a Jewel as Time is, it being of more weight and worth then all the World; because that cannot either pay a valuable price for its lengthening, or recall it when past and gone; for any therefore to be Prodigal of such a Treasure, must needs argue deep Decay to the power of Godliness: but it may be very necessary we explain this great word TIME; it may be considered under a double acceptation, with respect both to the space of it, and use of it: it is certain that Time in the space of it, is Gods gift. *Job* 7. 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon Earth?* That is, for space given of God to this noble end, that man should imploy or use this Time to the best advantage; so that its as certain, Time in the *use* or *abuse* is ours. *Eccle.* 3. 1. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the Sun*; that is, a Time with respect to the use or abuse; God lends the space of Time, appoints meet work to take up that space of Time lent. Lets hear the Conclusion (saith the Preacher) of the whole matter; Fear God and keep his Commandments, this is the whole Duty of Man: for God will bring every work, that is use or abuse of Time, into Judgment, for Salvation or Damnation goeth upon this great hinge of Time. And what was lent from God as *Jerusalems* greatest mercy, proved through themselves, their greatest Woe? For they had the space of Time remaining, when the use of Time was gone, they had neglected their Market, abused their Season. When God called for Fasting and Weeping, they called for Feasting and Rejoycing; like the old World, while fourty years space of Time in the Arks preparation, gave them

daily

daily summons to make ready, and get into the Ark; yet they slept away their time in Eating, Drinking, buying, Selling, Marrying, giving in Marriage; and take no care to make up their accounts, before their time was gone; we have a doleful passage to this purpose, and Oh that it may serve as a Land-mark for all Professors. *Luke* 19. 41, 42, 44. When Jesus Christ was come near *Jerusalem* in his Travels, as soon as he set his eyes upon the City, he falls aweeping at the lamentable misery they had, (not through the want of time, but through the misuse or abuse of time) brought upon themselves, which is evident from his own words, saying, *If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day*, (thy day of space from God given) *the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.* God is not bound to wait always, for thou must be laid even with the ground, because thou knewest not the TIME of thy visitation; Oh! How doth this bespeak Professors to value their time, even all time, youth, health, strength, Time of Affliction, Time of the Gospel, that when they come to end Time here, may not through the abuse, fall into the entrance of everlasting woe, as a reward hereafter.

Object. 1. But some may Object, if so dreadful a consequence attend the loss of Time; Doth not this exclude the grace of God, for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Answ. Its truth, its of God to shew mercy, and he hath prescribed his time as well as his way. *Wisdom cryeth without, she uttereth her voice in the chief place of concourse, in the opening of the gates in the City, saying, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and Scorners delight in Scorning, and set at*

nought all my counsel, and will none of my reproof; (for this abuse of Time) *when your destruction cometh as a Whirle-wind, when distress and anguish befalls you; then though ye call, I will not answer, ye shall seek me early, but shall not find me; for that ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.* Pro. 1. 21. &c

Object. 2. When may time be said to be redeemed?

Answer, When duty and time goeth hand in hand together. God hath ordained mans Time on earth, for no other end, but that every space of it should be filled up with the work of it. God puts them together in two great respects, First, To give assistance. Secondly, To give acceptance. And herein lyeth mans chief Wisdom, that he know his Time, and while it lasteth, to make the best earnings of it; for it is swifter then an Eagle in the Heavens hastning on its way, never at a stand; and when past, can never be recalled again. And because no man may plead vacancy of space in some periods of his Life, God hath provided imployment for every condition, whether young or old, bond or free, sick or in health, still *Eternity* waits upon us; and we are daily going forward or backward in those accounts; and as one day is gone over our heads, we are still a day the neerer to its borders. The sick Man may possibly recover; but if once DEAD all hope is gone. Hence comes those dreadful Lamentations; Woe is me! he is Dead, he is Dead. The whole world cannot purchase yesterday again. That *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* that 24 hours ago flourished, next day lies in Ashes: *Belshazzar the King, was but now drinking Wine in Excess, and praising the Gods of Gold and Silver*, in the same hour, a little Time makes a great change, look again, and he is *Trembling, the Joints*

of

of his Loyns are loosed, and his knees smite one against another: A KING yesterday, WORMS-MEAT this day. What therefore more precious then Time: Oh the glorious and the woefull effects of *Time*! In six days a world is made by the hands of the Almighty; in fourty days its drown'd by the same power, How many in one night have been stript of all? Less then three days laid *London* in Ashes. *A little little time*, rightly IMPROVED centers in *eternal blessedness*, while a like Time ABUSED centers in *eternal burning*; how precious therefore is Time. But *Abraham* said, *Son remember thou hadst thy Time of good things, and* Lazarus *his Time of evil things; now he is Comforted, and now thou art Tormented:* How doth this bespeak that Christian dying to Godliness, that hath so little sense of Times worth, that he is turned Prodigal.

I shall leave this to consideration, as to the worth of Time, and shall enquire into the Causes of the abuse of Time, and conclude all with a few directions how to redeem Time. Now the Causes may be assigned to these three. 1. Ignorance of times swiftness. 2. Ignorance of Times preciousness. 3. Non-consideration that the use or abuse of Time will certainly terminate in *Heaven* or *Hell*.

First, Ignorance of Times swiftness. It hath a continual motion, neither staying nor standing; its an useful Proverb, Time and Tide stayeth for none, Time is represented with Wings in a flying posture, because it is still journeying ere we are aware; Youth is come and gone, also old age hath taken possession, and Time will quickly carry us to the brink of Eternity. It well becomes Christians wherever they go to carry their hour-glass, as it were with them, and still remember how they have spent the past three quarters

already gone; for God will certainly take account of our Time, and we cannot keep from using or abusing it; Travellers count the Miles they have yet to go, before they can be at their Inn, and they count their hours, still remembring, Night cometh when none can work; and from hence quicken themselves to Diligence. The Spirit of God seems to intimate the improvement of our time from a double Obligation. 1 *Cor.* 7. 29, 31. Swift and short; it passeth away swiftly, therefore improve it withall your might. And it is short, carry that in your eye also; and therefore whether you weep or rejoyce, buy or sell, *pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

Secondly, Ignorance of Times preciousness; That may be a Cause why we are Prodigal of it. Time is of more worth then a World; for on the well improving it, depends our Eternal Welfare, and then the World cannot hinder. On the contrary, Time abused will bring us into an Eternal Woe, from which the World cannot redeem us. Time is precious upon a fourfold consideration. 1. Because it is a very short Time. 2. Because we have a great deal of work to do in that short time. 3. Because we have many Enemies to overcome in that short time. 4. Because we can never recall the loss of it. Lastly, Because we shall shortly find Heaven or Hell depends upon it. Oh Christians! Is not time precious, being clothed with so many weighty Circumstances.

Thirdly, Ignorance that the use or abuse of Time will certainly terminate in Heaven or Hell. While we are in this World we are Gods Stewards, and its required of Stewards that they be found faithful; and that appeareth best in the improvement of their time, which is a Talent, that must not be hid in a Napkin; Were this thought always before our eyes, (as the Rope

Rope is about the swift messengers Neck, which tells him, except he post on his way with utmost speed, he shall pay his life at the end of his Journey, as the fruit of his negligence) we should tremble in the way, at the remembrance of the end; did we sensibly feel that truth? Namely, HELL will be their end, that while they have Time, abuse Time. Ignorance here, makes so many turn *Busy-bodies, Tattlers, Back-biters, Whisperers,* going about from *House to House,* Idleing away their precious Time, *meddling with things they ought not*; little considering that all their ways and goings are seen and recorded in the book of Gods remembrance; and for which they must certainly give an account one day to him that is ready to judge *both quick and dead.* But I shall close all with a few directions how to redeem time to Gods glory, and our own true comfort.

First, That you may redeem Time. Keep down wandring thoughts after Vanity, for they will be busie, and offering themselves, and service at all times, and being entertained, will carry you Captive to the mispending precious Time. Its a fixed thought set on God, *Heaven* and *Hell* that leads out the heart as well as Head, to be always busie, or learning to make Religion our business; thoughts of Vanity nourisheth Idleness, while thoughts of Eternity delivereth from it. God took up a complaint against *Israel* on this account. *Jer.* 4. 14. *How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee.* Vain thoughts were not onely offered, but entertained; if in good earnest we would redeem our Time, we must keep down wandring thoughts.

Secondly, That you may redeem Time. Keep under immoderate cares for or about the things of this Life; *be full of care for nothing, saith the holy Scrip-*

ture, that is, let not your head and heart, be over-loaded with greateſt care, for the ſmalleſt matters; *Labour not* (moſt) *for that meat that periſheth; but for that which endureth to everlaſting Life.* A much cumbred mind, hath coſt many a Chriſtian, many Tears to recover their ground again; Its though common, an abſolute evil to be over-buſie about the things of this Life; always, raking and ſcraping, after God hath lent a competency of Food and Raiment, not to be content; to give now more room and time, for more noble imployment, hath to experience, left many to a woeful concluſion. I pray God this Caution may be bleſſed to my ſelf, and all that reads it; that we may learn of God to know what our frail Veſſel will hold, to the delivering us from that woeful ſin of ſtupidity, that I am much afraid is upon many in our day. *Luke* 21. 34, 35. Methinks the glance of mine eye now beholds many Profeſſors, that God hath bleſſed with a large portion of this Worlds good; ſo buſie to add houſe to houſe, and field to field (as if Heaven were entailed upon it, or they never to leave it) that they cannot without burden ſpare now and then one hour for the ſoul. I beg humbly, leave to ask ſuch this one queſtion; Whether or no did you ever conſider *Agurs* rule, *Pro.* 30. for your imitation, he was afraid of Poverty, (and ſo I believe are you) leaſt it ſhould tempt him to put forth his hand to ſteal; but he was as much afraid of Plenty, (and ſo I fear are not you) leaſt he ſhould be full and ſay, who is the Lord; I query hence, whether it is not as much a Chriſtians Duty and his Wiſdom, to be afraid of Riches, as of Poverty.

But

But Thirdly, That you may redeem Time. Avoid unneceſſary meetings or viſitings, and unprofitable diſcourſe; how much precious Time hath been ſpilt here. Woeful experience can beſt ſpeak. Gadding about without pondering the path of the Feet, hath been an in-let to a Tribe of evils. To go without a call, is as great an evil, as to with-hold when there is a call. Its the Glory of Chriſtianity to do all by *weight* and *meaſure*.

A Fool poureth out Fooliſhneſs, while the heart of the wiſe doth ſtudy to anſwer; to be ſlow to ſpeak, and that our ſpeech be always gracious, is as truly a Law of Chriſt, as not to Steal, Kill, or commit Adultery. We think not of this when we meet without Call, and talk without Meaſure; that is, Gad abroad (upon at moſt Tithe of Mint and Annis) and neglect at whom Juſtice and Mercy: its not onely our duty to fill up every ſpace of our Time with imployment, but with imployment moſt Noble; that our choice for the uſe of Time be with judgment, ſtill the leſſer to give way to the greater.

But Fourthly, That you may redeem Time. Do not over indulge or pamper the body; ſpare *exceedings at meals*; to add a Meal to them that have none: not as our Vulgar call it, at a good time feaſt your poor Neighbours onely, but do this in the ſerious or habit of doing; abate ſomething daily, to relieve ſome poor family daily. In like-manner, ſpare time from your Bed to give the more to your knees. Abridge an hour every night at leaſt, from bodily ſleep, to make you the more apt or ready for your eternal reſt. Think how many hours is fit under your circumſtances of labour, to give the body and ſpirits reſt from buſineſs, and ſeverely require the reſt for devoti-

devotion. Thus much for my Body, and thus much for my Soul: this will make you early with God on his day; and at midnight to prevent the night-watches with meditation on him.

Lastly, Redeem Time not onely for duties of Devotion, but also to be in the SPIRIT of those *Duties*, it is not sufficient to spend Time in prayer or meditation, if the Spirit of the work be absent. Dead Drink, when your Wine hath lost its Spirit, or Salt his Savour, hath but a dead acceptance with us, and less with God. The very Duties commanded, were by God abhorred; when the Spirit of those Duties was wa[illegible]g; to be at *Prayer*, at *Reading*, at *Hearing*, at *Meditation*, at *Fasting*, at the *Lords-Table* without being in the same Spirit that the holy men of God was, when in these services will be as useless as was theirs. *Isa.* 58. 1, 2, 3. *They sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways, asking for the ordinances of Justice, and took pleasure in approching to God, saying, wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not, and afflicted our Soul, and thou takest no knowledge*; They took time for the Duties, but redeemed not time for the spiritual ends of these Duties, rested in the service, for the service sake, and there proposed their reward, not doing all for their Lords sake, in obedience to him. Oh therefore be entreated to redeem Time to frame your selves, as well for the preparation to be in the Spirit of the Duty, as to redeem Time for the Duty it self. I leave all to consideration, and pass to the 34*th.* Sign of dying to Godliness.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

Shewing the sad estate of such as take more care for a great Trade, then a good Heart: Demonstrating that right Religion will be as carefull to the Duties of the first Table, as second; with four marks of an out-side Professor, and three Causes why House-work is more minded then Heart-work, with some helps how Christians may keep alive their first love-heat towards Religion.

SIGN XXXIV.

When a watchful care of a godly Life and Christian conversation, is more accidental then habitual.

When a Spirit of indifferency to the highest concern in the World, namely, *Religion* or a godly Life and conversation, is our business by the bye, and not in the serious or habit of it that is minded and pursued at pleasure, as great Persons do their Hawks and Hounds, take great pains now and then, but not as a daily trade and concern. This frame brings such under this Sign: For as it is evident in the growing Christian, the more Communion he hath with God, the more he thirsts for, the deeper he goes, the sweeter he feels it, and finds it, dying daily to what he once lived mostly; maintaining the savour and relish of Heaven with increases, counting all affairs and business whatsoever, subservient to this. But such as let go this hold, and seldom think of God or Religion, watch for a great Trade more then a good Heart, a rich habit

Habit more then a rich Conversation, fear and love, to God and man, taught by the precept of man. This is a dying state, and will without speedy recovery end desolate. The best of Men, in the best of their watchful care for a God-like life, need daily to pray for pardon of the imperfections of their best endeavours; and that God would through Jesus the Advocate, overlook what is short, and accept the sincerity of their heart, the root of the matter being their best second. This doubtless is the meaning of *Davids* prayer, *Lord judge me according to the integrity of mine heart*: his Conversation was not without slips, but it was without his heart. Herein do I exercise my self (or make it my Trade) to have always a Conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards all men, that is, both to the duties of the first Table and second: for true Religion will be as watchful to give God his due with the in-side, as Man his due with the out-side. It were well if all Professors could thus approve their hearts, that bleating of Sheep, and lowing of Oxen, would not be so much heard as it is; but there are a Generation that are more shew then substance; and it is too too much to be feared when weighed in the ballance will be found wanting; such may be known by these few marks.

First, They make the greatest shew and noise on days of solemnest Devotion, hanging down the Head, dejecting the countenance, like *Israel* of old, promise great things at such a time; *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it.* Here is a flourishing out-side, but its far from the heart, as evidently appears by what return God that knows the heart makes, saying, *I have heard their words, they have well spoken*

spoken all that they have said, Oh that there were such an heart in them, to fear me and keep my Commandments always. I fear I shall find so little of their heart in what they have promised, that at the next trial of scarcity for Bread or Water, they will murmur.

Secondly, Such talk most of Religion, when it is least costly, or most in fashion. Yes, and in acts of publick Charity, outdo their equals in estate, even the sincere, one measuring applause of Men, his rule to give by; the other making Judgment, his rule to give by. None cried *Hosanna* to day, more loud then they, that cried *away with him, Crucifie him* to morrow. Now a truly growing Christian is as well rejoyced with Christ in a Prison as in a Palace.

Thirdly, Such when they have little else to do, will be most publick to the neighbourhood in Family duties of Devotion: scarce allow one hour all the Week from their labour, for any service, but Bed and Board: yet now so zealous, as passeth for God in the form; it may be big with acknowledgment of their Plenty, and what good they will do with it; but the next real neighbour (where Interest is not in the bottom) that comes to try them a few days, for less then the tithe of what lieth secure in their Christ: Yet, it lies so near their heart, that an excuse of near affinity to a down right Lie, shall block up the way; and because Conscience shall say little, it shall be smothered with one excuse or other, like these, Charity begins at home. I know not how soon I may want it my self, *&c.*

Lastly, Such whose care is more accidental then habitual, may be known by this mark also, they can well dispense with a conniviance what Religion they are of, when it will probably tend to the lessening their trade or reputation among men, not mattering or minding the loss, may hence accrue to Religion; while

while ſome cried, Lord lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us; others cry, who will ſhew us any good. Theſe are ſuch under theſe marks, as meaſuring themſelves by themſelves; ſay they are *ſpiritually rich, and have need of nothing, while they are wretched, miſerable, blind and naked.* But I ſhall paſs to ſome Cauſes of this Decay, briefly what may be aſſigned as an occaſion for this defect. 1. Senſuality or living by ſenſe. 2. Accounting Religion by halves, or thinking the form without power ſufficient. 3. Low apprehenſions of an hereafter ſtate. Senſuality or living by ſenſe. Faith and ſenſe are direct oppoſites: where the one dwells, the other cannot dwell; one will have dominion, and ſenſe ſpeaks loudeſt here, and thinks all well while Trade proſpers; *Soul take thine eaſe.* My reſt is in preſent injoyments, I find and feel ſweetneſs there, more then in all hereafter promiſes. Preſent poſſeſſions pierce the ſenſes more, then all that can be ſaid of Heaven it ſelf.

From hence men have no more obligation to be Religious, then what ſerves Intereſt and ſuits with opinion: for take but away Faith in a happineſs to come; and you have no more hold to make you God-like, then a drowning man that hath catched a Reed, as the next ſhift to keep him from ſinking.

Secondly, Accounting Religion by halves, or thinking the form without power ſufficient. This hath and doth carry many Souls Captive, and placeth them upon a groundleſs confidence, taking part for the whole, a large profeſſion without poſſeſſion, crying louder, *the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord.* Then he who indeed can moſt ſo approve himſelf unto God. It is Satans device to keep any back from the form of Religion; for the form ought to be,

be, and is honourable in its place; also his malice to cause any rest onely here in the form, both must go together shell and kernel; empty baggs will not purchase Lands. *Lord we have eat at thy Table, and thou hast taught in our streets, and in thy name we have done many wonderful works. Depart (saith Christ) for all this you are workers of iniquity.* You are great sayers, but little doers. *Behold the days come saith the Lord, that I will punish all them that are circumcised with the uncircumcised,* Edom, Moab, *and* Ammon, *for all these are uncircumcised in flesh, and the house of* Israel *are uncircumcised in heart.* Jer. 9. 25, 26. From hence its most clear, that Form and Power must go together; and woe be to one when alone.

But Thirdly, Another cause why a godly Life and Christian conversation is more accidental then habitual may be this, Low apprehensions of an hereafter state. When those two great truths Heaven and Hell are not believed to be in their verity, nor so apprehended, where remotely believed, as the greatest of glory or good, and the greatest of woe or bad. It hath like effects upon such subjects as the Angels message had upon *Lots* sons in Law, they preach, up get you hence, *for the Lord will destroy this place.* But all seemed to them like Idle Tales, they believed not the message, till they felt the flames; and now it is too late, the Sermon is ended, and the season is over. Nothing keeps a Christian in his first heat like the maintaining large apprehensions of hereafter Glory; *For you had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods;* (Whence came this great change) *Know in your selves that you have in Heaven, a better and an eduring substance.* Heb. 10. 34. I shall leave this to consideration, and so pass to the 35*th.* Sign of dying to Godliness.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXV.

Setting forth the different ends of labour for Temporal and true bread, that is, to be in onreye, and that our calling is not to take us off our high calling. With three Causes why Care for neceſſaries, prevails beyond care for neceſſities.

SIGN XXXV.

When care for your body is uſually moſt pleaſant, and care for your ſoul uſually moſt irkſome.

The light of the underſtanding is now certainly grown very dim, when chief care runs in the wrong Channel. As the Soul-concern is much more of true value then the body, ſo it calleth for much more of our ſervice. But it may be very meet, firſt, to explain theſe two terms in the Sign, Soul and Body; by Soul here I would be underſtood, whole man conſidered in his Reſurrection ſtate, and by Body, whole man in his preſent ſtate. No man except he be a Bruit, but believeth that he ſhall be as compleat man in Body, Soul, and Spirit hereafter (though firſt worms may eat his fleſh) as he is at his beſt ſtate, ſo here now for preſent.

But further. By Soul and Body I would alſo be underſtood, Man conſidered as one that knows he ſhall live but a few years at moſt here, and after this life is ended, live in ſpiritual joy or Torment hereafter. This premiſed, here are two parts to be provided for, and that as matter of Duty, one is a temporal part, the

the other is an eternal part. Food and Raiment we owe as a dew Debt, which both God and Nature requires us to pay; and to that end it is as lawful to take care by industry, to earn wages for the relief of Natures necessities, as it is to avoid Poison, for fear it should annihilate the whole man. Hence it is called in Scripture, a Labour, *and the hand of the diligent is said to make rich, and Idleness to cloth with Rags.* And therefore saith our blessed Apostle. *We hear there are some among you are Idle, not working at all; Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own Bread.* 1 Thes. 3. 11, 12.. *And he that provideth not for his own, namely, them of his Family hath denied the Faith, and is worse then an Infidel.* All this, it must needs be granted forbids *Slothfulness and makes him Brother to a great waster.* So that Christ Jesus when he saith in *John* 6. 27. *Labour not for that meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life,* doth not prohibit labour for perishing Meat (no more then his saying, he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*, intends not any benefit, at any time to the *Gentiles*) but corrects that grand extream, in our toyling to early up rising, and late going to bed, and eating the bread of carefulness from a wrong Principle, and by a wrong end; that is, not so labouring in the pleasure of industry, because God commands it, (which is the right Foundation of all Action) But because of the sweet profit that follows this labour in conjunction, with a covetous desire to be *great*, rather then *good*, suitable to that Spirit in Christs time, *Verily I say unto you, ye seek me not, because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* This also appears, may be to a wrong end, for doubtless,

leſs, Gods end is, that men labour that they maintain good works for neceſſary uſes; it being more for Gods honour to give, then to receive. Now to labour for periſhing meat, for meats ſake onely is below the principle of a Heaven-born man, who doth all by Rule, and for the ſake of the Ruler. But again, as labour is commanded and laudable for periſhing things, in its place, the wiſdom of a Chriſtian; and indeed his Intereſt lies in this, to ſort his labour to his work; God hath given man here, a Calling or Trade, and a high Calling or more noble Trade. The firſt is to work with ſuitable diligence for neceſſaries or things that we cannot well want, as to our well being; the ſecond is, to work for neceſſities or things that muſt be, without which our being is taken away; we may live for a little without common bread, and we can but die to the Grave *for want of the fruit of the field*, but for want of true Bread, *we ſhall periſh or be tormented in Hell to all Eternity*. So that our bleſſed Lord, rebukes that extream in his words to *Martha*, who doubtleſs did well in her place, had ſhe ſtood there; for ſhe was making ready Chriſts Dinner, but layeth out her ſelf more then the ſervice of right could call for, which occaſions theſe words of Chriſt, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* She was overcumbred, or took too much pains, too much of her Spirit and Meditation bended that way; ſhe left little or no room for better thoughts, but was given up as it were to mind this, while a matter ſo weighty, calls for the whole of our ſtrength and might. *Thou ſhalt ſerve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy might.*

Now this extream, reduceth Chriſtians to this dying frame. And from hence, care for their bodies is moſt

most pleasant, and care for their souls most painful, that is, days in one, is less irksom then hours in the other. But I shall speak more of this in the Cause and Cure. Which may be reduced to these three heads. 1. Ignorance what a frail body in its best estate we thus labour for. 2. Want of understanding of what a real worth a souls weal is hereafter. 3. Want of understanding of the irrepairable woe of a Souls loss hereafter.

First, Ignorance what a frail body in its best estate we thus labour for. If the husband-man was sure that after all his toyl of Plowing, Harrowing, Tillage, and Cost, an Enemy should Reap, it would certainly cool his courage, and take off that edge that whets on his Spirit, in good hopes to enjoy a desirable Crop. How easily may this proposition be reduced into practice? How many careful *Soul-Robbers*, while worldly industrious Fathers, toyl early and late, to set that son on horse-back, who rides but the faster, to enrich and puff up with Pride the young, up start Tavern and Ale-house owner? How many greedy Husbands, that grudged themselves rest in the night, crying, when will it be day, *that they may add house to house, and land to land*; and when a fair possession is thus raked together, then comes Death and arrests them, and admits a stranger to enioy what they thus Sweat and Toyled for; the like may be said of the miserable scraping Mother, that robbeth her Servants back and bowels with pinching Hunger, all which in just judgment to her, is but laid up for a stranger. These Instances the wise preacher comments upon *Eccl.* 4. 8. *There is one alone, and there is not a second, yea he hath neither Child nor Brother, yet is there no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with Riches, neither saith for whom he doth labour and bereave his Soul of*

Good. This is also Vanity, yea it is a sore Travel; and for remedy, the same Preacher doth apply this, saying, *There is nothing better for man, then that he should Eat and Drink, and make his Soul enjoy good in his labour; this also I saw that it was from the hand of God.*

Secondly, Want of understanding what a real worth a Souls weal is hereafter. Who if he knew what he did, would lose the blessed company of Almighty God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Spirit, the elect Angels, and glorified Saints for ever and ever. And this exchange to be made for so corruptible a thing as Gold and Silver, which God doth not forbid in its use, but abuse; while we keep it under as a Servant, and not let it raign as a King, it is allowable; *But to do good and to communicate. Forget not forthwith such Sacrifices, God is well pleased.* And for this very end is substance lent us, not to spend upon our Lusts; would we therefore be recovered from this Decay, where it is begun, or prevent it where like to come: We must then labour with all our might for an enlightened understanding in the precious worth of a saved Soul; this was the pitch unto which the holy Apostle in his primitive love for the *Ephesian* Church. *Chap.* 16. 18. reached after, wherefore, *I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the Saints.* Oh! Could we but conceive what a gain it is, for our Souls to dwell with God for ever, we would omit no care and diligence to make our calling and election sure.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Want of understanding of the irrepairable woe of a Souls loss hereafter, that loseth God, and getteth Damnation. Tell me Christian, who in his right wits, would *rise early, and sit up late,* and toyl all the year, like the *Egyptian Brick-makers*; for the reward of a *torturing Death,* or to be *Sawn asunder,* or *Roasted on a Grid-Iron?* How much worse is HELL? The loss of a SOUL cannot be valued, no price can be set against it, nothing but the *blood of God* could redeem it; and therefore saith our Lord, *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole World, and loose his own Soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul.* The Wisdom of God could find no price to purchase a Soul out of Hell in this World, therefore is the loss irrepairable; and yet for this woeful state do many Labour, and *weary themselves to commit Iniquity*; daring God to damn them, as if their Judgment slept, or *Damnation slumbered.* Now the good Lord bless these three Cautions to every considerate Reader; and so I pass to the 36*th.* Sign of dying to Godliness.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Proving ſolemn and ſet times of Meditation, one eſſential to the being of Chriſtianity; ſhewing of what efficaſie to our beginning, perſevering, and ending in Godlineſs. Meditation is, with Directions on what. Four Objects we are to place our Meditation; alſo ſhewing three bleſſed advantages it brings; with a deſcription what right Meditation is, and direction about fitteſt time and place for this excellent Soul-enriching work.

SIGN. XXXVI.

When you are much a ſtranger to the practical part of Meditation on the word and works of God.

How eſſential Meditation is, not onely to a Chriſtians well being but to his very being, may appear upon deep enquiry; it being one of the great leſſons God gives in charge to his redeemed, expecting they ever continue in the practice of ſo great a bleſſing; inſomuch, that no ſinner can be ſaid to begin well, or rightly break off his ſins by Repentance under God, but by the means of Meditation. Till a ſtout-hearted Rebel begins to ſtand ſtill, and to think, what am I a doing? Whither am I a going? What will be the end of this my ſinful Trade? There is no hopes of Reformation, therefore ſaith God of *Jeſurum*, *They are a Nation void of Councel, neither is there any underſtanding in them; oh that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end,* that

that is, that they would but ponder or meditate on the dreadful effects that will follow this their way and doings. In the 50 *Psalm*, you have a notable passage added, as the essentialleſt remedy to a doleful complaint. *verse* 19, 20, 21. *Thou giveſt thy mouth to evil, thy Tongue frameth deceit, thou ſitteſt and ſpeakeſt againſt thy Brother, and ſlandereſt thine own Mothers Son. Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilent, thou thoughteſt I was altogether ſuch an one as thy ſelf.* So that here it is clear, they had ſinned under ſuch Aggravations as had turned them into perfect Atheiſme, they thought God like themſelves. Well, here is the diſeaſe, and it is next to Mortal, What is the remedy God in mercy preſcribes? *verſe* 22. *Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt I teur you in pieces*; There is but one *medium* between you and utter deſolation, and that is, ſtand ſtill, and bethink your ſelves, before my fury break forth like fire that none can quench.

Queſt. But why is Meditation ſo powerful an advantage to the reforming a Rebel to God.

Anſw. Becauſe none but ſuch as are ſtark Mad, out of their Wits, will run into a Caldron of *Boyling Oyl*, which will certainly deſtroy them in an Inſtant. Thus do they and much worſe, that run in a way of ſin, and to Meditate or conſider whither they are running, is the effectualleſt way for Remedy; and indeed that without which remedy can never come.

But Secondly, As it is impoſſible to begin well, except this rule of Meditation be ſubmitted unto. In like manner, it is impoſſible to continue in well doing, without continuing in this Duty of Meditation, not now and then by fits and girds, but all the day long. *Joſh.* 1. 8. *This book of the Law, ſhall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou ſhalt meditate therein day and*

night, (mark that) and why day and night (mark that also) *that thou maist observe to do according to all that is written therein; and then shall all thy way be prosperous, and thou shalt have good success.*

Less then this is not taught hence, That Meditation day and night on the word and works of God, is the onely means to keep up in its vigour and burning beams, the glorious and desirable apprehentions of God, and longings with increases after God. Its a Duty carries with it so much of true Dignity, that nothing but Ignorance keeps Christians from being ravished with desire after it. What brings the heart to God, but Meditation? What makes sin continue to appear sinful, but Meditation? What keeps up affection to God, but Meditation? What makes grace and glory continue to appear amiable, but Meditation? What makes Gospel-ordinances the way to Glory appear easie and light, though to the flesh otherwise burdensom, but Meditation? In a word, its essential to our ending well, without which we can never persevere with that true courage, and constant serenity. When *David* comes to describe the true blessed man, he tells us, its one that in Gods Law doth meditate day and night; this makes him like a Tree, planted by the River side, which bringeth forth his fruit in his season, whose Leaf doth not fade, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. To be a stranger here, then, must needs render us in a dying frame. By this time I trust you are convinced of the necessity of continual Meditation from the consideration of the advantage or loss by doing or omitting.

It may be asked now seeing Meditation must be constant day and night, on what Objects must this Meditation be placed?

Answ.

Answ. First, On God, Let your Meditation be placed on God, as the Fountain of your all, eye him in this Duty, as the Founder of that vast fabrick of Heaven, Earth, the Seas, and all that liveth in them.

Secondly, On the Lord Jesus Christ, Let your Meditation be placed, remembring from what glory he came for your sakes, what curse he took upon him for your sakes; and what he is now performing by way of Mediatorship for your sakes.

Thirdly, On your Duties and Frailties meditate. *Psal.* 119 15. 99. *I will meditate on thy precepts, thy Testimonies are my Meditations. Lord! What is Man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou visiteſt him; Verily, every Man in his beſt estate, is altogether vanity. Lord make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.*

Fourthly, Meditate on the ordinances you practice, or have subjected unto, Let no command pass you without a serious sight, by a pondering Meditation into the spiritual Author, Use, and End of that commandment. We loose the Spirit or Marrow of many a duty and priviledge, for want of a narrow enquiry into the meaning of that duty; it was easie for *Israel* to perform the services yearly, some hundreds of years after the Institution, and never the better if they did omit enquiring into the use and end of those services, by way of Meditation.

Go not to any solemn duty, as Prayer, hearing the word Preached, reading the holy Scriptures, the Lords-Supper, Fasting, or any other solemn part of Gods worship, without solemn meditation whither you are going, and why; and so doing, then God will bless you with the instituted end of those appointments you are in the practice of. But it may be queſti-

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ed again, what is meant by practical Meditation, and when that must be performed.

Answ. By practical meditation is meant a reducing universals into particulars; for what is always a duty in the general, must to keep it alive in the spirit of it, be reduced into particulars; else a constant form, may lose the power; it is therefore doubtless, essential to the well being of every Christian, that according to the circumstances of his condition in the World, he set certain time, or times apart, such a day, such a part of that day on purpose aside, from all wordly, or religious business else, onely to this serious practical work of Meditation on some one, or such like past particulars premised already. The next question may be.

Quest. 4. But why must we thus meditate, as to object, subject, and Time.

Answ. First, Because it will make it become habitualy pleasant & delightful. Secondly, Because it will make it become perpetually profitable. Thirdly, Because at all times, and in all conditions, doing every work in a dew deliberate weight of Meditation, brings Heaven to us in the earnest of it, before it carry us to Heaven in the full possession of it. A fifth question may be this,

Quest. 5. But what is this Meditation, that is so highly extolled so universally essential and profitable? And how must we set about it, and when may we be said to be in the practical part of it?

An. It is not the bare thinking on truths, and rowling them in the understanding, and memory, by way of *pro* and *con*, with a common acceptance, from a common apprehension of truths necessary usefulness; because thus may persons imploy their cogitations without any

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rootd advantage; and thus far and farther, undoubtedly went the thorny ground hearers, for, *they heard Gods word, and anon with joy received it,* which could not be without some over-acts of Meditation. But they did not so Chew upon it, as to turn all the faculties of Soul, into the Image or likeness of it. Therefore as it is not this, so by way of Affirmation; Meditation rightly considered, It is to bring essential truths about certain Salvation, or certain Damnation into practice.

For if the truth of these, in their most comprehensive sense possibly attainable into Credence, be not premised as a forerunner to prepare way for this blessed guest Meditation. It will have but like acceptance as a *King*, in the habit and Equipage of a *Common Man*; because though really a *King* of great estate and dignity; yet being not so understood by us, meets not with that reception from us; so Meditation, when right, it is a carrying truths from the Head, down to the Heart; and calling into a most solemn Councel, all the Powers of the Soul, retired into the Cabinet of Consideration from every other debate or business whatsoever, and a continuance till it turns (like the Churming of Milk) all its truth into thy Blood and Spirits, and from thence into life and practice; Just as the contemplation of the wicked, upon wicked objects, makes them burn with Lust in their inward man, till a vent into action, it hath passage; they think of, or meditate on wicked objects in the Night, and when the Morning awakes they act it. *Psal.* 34. I shall explain this right Meditation, what it is, by this experienced similitude; A Certain Man hath an Arm or Leg fallen into a slight hurt, which being unconcerned about, it festereth, and so breaks his rest night and day, that its now high time to call for

for advice, which upon view of the premises, tells him, this Member must be cut off, or his Life must pay for it; this sorely amuseth the Man: on one hand he feeleth Anguish and Fears, the Issue on the other hand, he dreads the extremity and loss of Sawing off a Member; upon the whole, he enters into such a deliberate consideration or meditation, as you may well imagine, takes in the whole councel of his inward parts; and from sense of pain on one hand, and danger on the other hand; his vital heat is so augmented, that upon the whole, a resolution is taken to submit himself to the parting with that Member, neer and dear, in value, beyond a Kingdom, rather then hazard Life; this is the truest motive. Gain of Heaven in its magnificent Good, or portion of Hell among the Damned, in its intollerable Bad, calls all the powers of the Soul to practical Meditation; and this is that that you may call RIGHT MEDITATION. So that it is not a bare thinking, or meer imployment of the Brain, or improvement of the memory, from the apprehension of Truth, as Truth barely, but as essentially good, and the one thing needful, without which, the person must perish, that gives not true acceptance or entertainment to this powerful Duty in the understanding.

Quest. But it may now be asked, what may be the fittest time and place for the performance of this great Duty of Meditation?

Answ. Its certainly needful that Christians pitch their set time, so the work be done, and a time be allotted for the work; God in mercy to the various conditions of Christians, hath not limited it to just this or that day, or hour. But from hence lets beware of omission, the time being at our choice, doth not allow a prohibition of the Duty, but rather calls for

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a more generous resignation to the Duty; if a man hath done you a signal kindness, his leaving thankful acknowledgment to your choice, as to time and measure is no Argument to damp your Spirits, but rather animate them to the more noble return. And now having resolved upon the set times, and that nothing common shall alter you. The next work is to say something about the fittest place for this Service; But first give me leave to advise you in Humility, to be frequent in this work; do not let your times be of long distance, lest that occasion strangeness, or a freezing of the Affections, and make thee also less apt or skilful in it, which in time, may end in cooling thy Spirits to that degree of barrenness, that at length its wholly become a burden without delight, and so what once was a *Soul-raising Duty* after God and Heaven, is by this means become a *Soul-lothing Service.*

Now as to the fittest place for this Duty, the example of Christ Jesus, is certainly our best rule in this matter, who was wont often to be retired into some Garden, Mount or other solitary place. *Mark* 1. 35. to be retired from sight and noise, and converse with all company, is doubtless fittest place to meet God; therefore it is said of *Isack*, he went forth as he was wont at the evening Tide. Oh! the rich advantage and Banquet that this prepares for us in its solemn and frequent use. None knows it but such as have felt it by experience; and all such will with me conclude, he is deeply a dying to Godliness, that is a stranger to this practical part of Meditation on the word and works of God. I shall pass this: Consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. *Amen.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

Shewing that in the true belief of the truth of Heaven and Hell, rests the Authority of Religion, and what Torturing Deaths many have chearfully chosen for the sake of Heaven; with three Causes why some decay in this spiritual frame.

SIGN. XXXVII.

When Communication about Heavens Joy and Hells Terrour, hath less lasting impression in Duties of Obedience to God and Man, then an olds Wives Fable.

In the true belief of these two great truths, rests the Authority of Religion; take the sense of them away, and you take away the hedge of Government, and Bounds of Christianity; I would not be Religious, and deny my self of these pleasing and profitable Objects, saith many, were it not that I believe there is a *Heaven* of *Joy Eternal*, and a *Hell* of *Terrour Eternal* to come: What else indeed is Religion; *Man is born to Trouble, his Life but a Span*? What can carry him above this, but conversing with the Joys to come. A Barren apprehension of this, leads to the height of *Atheism*, and turns us Bruitish. Hereafter good, is so desirable in its self, that it hath carried many beyond themselves, to these passages of obedience in doing and suffering, that are next to a miracle; insomuch, that to admiration, persons have given themselves over as a free choice to those *Torturing Deaths*, which nothing but the belief of a God, and the

the Truth of an hereafter enjoyment with him, could have lead them too; *Abraham* was carried Captive upon this very Pillar. *Heb.* 11. 9, 10. By the belief of this great Truth of hereafter glory; *he sojourned in the Land of a promise, as in a strange Countrey, dwelling in Tabernacles, with* Isaac *and* Jacob, *Heirs with him of the same promises.* Now, whence was this, that he should be a Stranger to his own, in a Land of Liberty; the same Spirit that reports it, gives for our Learning, the reason of it; namely, *Because he looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Moses while a Child, was invested with Royal Priviledges, and chosen the adopted Son of the Kings onely Daughter, wanting nothing that a Princes Court could bestow; and if we may believe History, was not like to be long without the Crown, having the chief affection of the apparent Air, yet no sooner comes he to understanding of that present Princely Glory, in competition with what was to come hereafter, and finding one could not stand under these circumstances with the other; what upon this doth he do? *verse* 24, 25, 26. of the Chapter before cited; *By faith* Moses *when he was come to years, refused to be called the Son of* Pharaohs *Daughter.* A very great piece of self-denial; what! Refuse to be a Princes Son? But that is not all, for he in this loss, rests not a Negative Sufferer, *But chooseth rather to endure Affliction with the People of God, then to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* Well! He leaves the Court, and now betakes himself to the Society of a contemptible company of poor *Israelites*, that served *Pharaohs* Task-masters, and were used with Rigour, groaning under their Burdens and Bondage so much, and relief to visibility so far off, that God onely must bring Plagues and Miracles upon the Land of *Egypt*,

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or no deliverance can be seen any way to come at this juncture of affairs, and under these circumstances, *he esteemeth the reproach for Christ, greater Riches then* Egypts *Treasure*; and the Argument of all this, lies in these words, *For he had respect to the recompence of Reward*, about which, if he had not had considerable communings, he could never understandingly have made himself so despicable with that affectionate choice; as great a Testimony of the prevelency of this great Argument of hereafter Joy; we have also in the 25*th. verse*, of some that *were Tortured, not accepting deliverance.* Tortured, Imagine they were drawn with *Wild-Horses*, Limb from Limb, or *Sawn asunder*, or laid upon a *Hot Grid-Iron*, or run through being alive, with a stake fixed in the Ground, or tied up by the Hair of the Head to a Tree, till famished with Hunger, or thrown into a Vessel of *Boyling-Oyl*, or pulled in pieces with *Hot Pincers*, or run through with *Hot-Irons*; and at the Instant of all these cruelties, had deliverance offered upon conditions, easie to the flesh thus mangled, yet did not consent to be freed from these cruelties, *that they might obtain a better Resurrection.* Thus we may behold as in a Glass, to what a degree beyond themselves in doing; and suffering persons were carried out upon their belief of, and communications about hereafter Glory; and it is as evident both in Scripture and Experience, that where the understanding is blinded to the knowledge of these great truths *Heaven* and *Hell*. The Actions of such Men and Women, are beyond common bounds, Buitish, or Beast-like; For in the first of the *Romans, verse* 26. downwards, *Their Women did change the natural use, into that which is against Nature; even the Men likewise, leaving the natural use of the Woman, burned in their Lust one toward*

ward another, Men with Men, working that which is unseemly to be named, being filled with all unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness, filled with Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, Whisperers, Back biters, haters of God, Despiteful, Proud, Boasters, Inventers of evil things, disobedient to Parents; Who that reads this black list would not conclude Hell is broak loose? Now upon a little further enquiry, it will appear this Hellish Tribe came from blindness in their minds, as to the true God. *verse* 28. *And even as they did not like* (or approve) *to retain God in their knowledge; therefore God gave them over to a reprobate mind.* We have a like Testimony for this, by the Apostle St. *Paul. Eph.* 4. 18, 19. of some, *who being past feeling* (the force of Heaven or Hell in the promise of the best of good, or threatning of the worst of bad,) *gave themselves over unto Lasciviousness to work all uncleaness with greediness.* And as the grand Cause of all the Spirit of God adds this, *having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart*, God and Heaven-ward. Let us but a little come down to our own experience, what dreadful Murders, Whoredoms, Swearing, Damning Oaths, Thefts, Idolatries, Witchcrafts, Adulteries, Drunkenness, Revelling; and a Multitude of other worse then beast-like practices are committed in our Land; against, and even in contempt of the Promises or Threatnings of *Heaven* and *Hell*; so that in a word, non-communication with these two states, opens the Door to all manner of Licentiousness, and puts such upon a post hast speed into the *Jaws of Hell*, of which, they are no more feelingly aware, then was *Lots* Son in Law, who never believed the Flames, till they irrecoverably

felt them to their endless Anguish, from which like state, the good Lord deliver us. *Amen.*

Thus may we read the Blessed, and Woeful effects that must inevitably follow, and do attend a continued communing with *Heaven* and *Hell*, and a continued estrangedness to such high concerns. And how doth this call upon the growing Christian to double his diligence in making the Joys of *Heaven*, and Torments of *Hell* the constant objects of his Meditation? And how doth this also bespeak the Dying Christians state, *Wretched, Miserable, Poor, Blind, and Naked*, whatever thoughts he may have of himself, and calls upon him to Repent, and do his first works, by being in a restless frame of Spirit, till he finds the Joys of Heaven and Woes of Hell; the fervent objects of his Meditation: otherwise, God will most certainly remove his Candlestick off his place for ever, except he repent.

I shall now speak of the Causes of this Decay in Godliness, namely, why communications about Heavens Joys, and Hells Terrours, hath less lasting impression to duties of Obedience, then an olds Wives Fable; and they are three, which being learned, may serve as signal helps to prevent this Decay, where like to come, or remove it where begun.

1. Unbelief. 2. Unaptness to practical Meditation. 3. Indisposedness to fervent Prayer.

First, Unbelief. This is such a Soul-starving sin, that it barrs up the way of Gods Spirit, from doing any mighty work upon that heart. Thus prepossest *Heaven*, though the chiefest good in God, and *Hell*, though the chiefest bad, bears no force either to deter or perswade the Heart where Infidelity dwells. *Mat.* 13.58. *And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* A giving to Christ Jesus,

Credence

Credence in his words and works, is the great Inn-let to true Lasting Joy; and calls upon Christians to the use of all possible means that their Faith may increase. 2 *Thes.* 1. 3. *We are bound to give thanks to God always for you Brethren, because your Faith groweth exceedingly; and the Just shall live by his Faith: thy faith hath made thee whole. We have access by Faith, Thou standest by Faith; by Faith* Noah *made an Ark; and saved his House; By Faith* Abraham *became a Stranger in the Land of promise; by Faith* Moses *forsook* Egypt, *and without Faith, its impossible to please God.* And he that believeth not, shall be Damned.

Secondly, Unaptness to practical Meditation. As Faith receives the Truth, so Meditation digests it; its the digesture of the Food, that makes it turn to nourishment. We lose the benefit and true advantage of many a Sermon, for want of a Churning it into nourishment by Meditation. *And all they that heard it, wondred at those things which was told them by the Shepheards. But* Mary *kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her Heart,* or addicted her self to the habit of Meditation. From hence, her Heart became a lodging place for her Lords sayings Nothing turns Preaching into Practice like this; the great reason next to *Unbelief*, why men hear so much, and profit so little, is want of making what we hear our Meditation, or calling into Councel the inward parts, and pondering deeply there.

Hence comes a laying to Heart. This makes the Impression take deep Root downwards, and bring forth Fruit upwards.

Hence, became *David* more wise then his Teachers, *I have more understanding then all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation.* He gave up himself

to meditate this carried truth, from his Head to his Heart.

Hence, the blessed Father to his Son, 1 *Tim.* 4. 15. gives in charge as a most Soveraign remedy against Ignorance, or unprofitableness in the Ministry. *Meditate upon these things, give thy self wholly to them,* (mark that) so shall thy profiting appear to all.

Thirdly, A third Cause why communication about *Heaven* and *Hell*, hath no more lasting impression; may be this, Indispositedness to fervent Prayer. When Truths are believed, and by Meditation taken as is a piece of Raw-meat, and put into the Pot of the Heart, and boiled, then comes fervent Prayer, and obtains a Blessing: for all is sanctified by the word of God, and Prayer. This is a true maxim; a barren Soul to Prayer, is always a barren Soul to Practice. It is the Councel of Jesus Christ, if we would be secured from that fatal sleep coming upon the World. *Luke* 21. 36. to watch and pray, mark that always, that we may be counted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the World, and to stand before the Son of Man three times together. When Christ was about to drink his bitter Cup. *Mat.* 16. 39. 42. 44. *He went a little further and fell on his face and prayed, and he went again the second time and prayed, and he went again the third time and prayed;* And when he was about to send his Disciples to Preach the Gospel, mind for your Imitation, his Practice. *Luke* 6. 12. *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a Mountain to pray, and continued all Night in prayer to God.* Mark that, Your Lord is all Night in Prayer to God to obtain a blessing for you; How many whole nights have you spent in Prayer for a blessing upon your selves? Its no marvail why you are so like *Pharaohs* lean Kine, in fruits to God and Man-ward, when you

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are so seldom upon your knees in your Closet. For my Love, they are my Adversaries saith good *David*; but I give my self unto prayer. *Psal.* 109. 4. *I will that Men pray every where.* 1 Tim. 2. 8. *Pray without ceasing.* 1 Thes. 5. 17. *Men ought always to Pray, and not to Faint,* Luke 18. 1. *In every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known.* Now the Blessing of God go along with these Cautions, and bring them whom to thy Heart *Amen.* So I pass to the 38*th.* Sign of dying to Godliness.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

Shewing how prevalent to a Christ-like Conversation, the True thoughts of Heaven and Hell is, Demonstrating how much rather the Argument of Christs passion, ought to oblige, Dialogue Wise; explained by two despicable Prisoners, pitied by two pittiful Strangers, with three or four helps assigned for practical Application.

SIGN. XXXVIII.

When the thoughts of a dying Jesus, for your sin, doth little dissuade you from an unchristian Conversation.

God in his Wisdom and unspeakable Mercy, hath provided a Body of Blessed Arguments, as so many cords of Love, to deter from sin, and oblige to Virtue; not that he hath need of either our Persons, or our Services. *For the whole Earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof.* But he is a God, full of Love and

Pity, *taking no pleasure in the death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn and Live*, hath therefore prepared Heaven as the blessed end of reward, to encourage to Virtue, as the way to this end. And this Argument hath proved of Blessed advantage in all Ages, to encline the heart and will, to make Virtues ways, though grievous to the Flesh, yet desirable, nd as voluntary choice, at that time when attended with he utmost hazard of whatsoever was neer or dear, even to Life it self, parting with, and choosing not Death barely in common, but the Torturings of Death at the same time, in the hope and expectation of this blessed state hereafter. *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful, saw Christs day, and was glad, or comforted; so that he accounted himself *a stranger in the Land of promise, dwelling there in Tabernacles with* Isaac *and* Jacob, *Heirs with him of the same promise.* The great Argument to this great self-denial, lies here, *For he looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker was God.* Moses chose Affliction with the *Israelites*, while in *Egyptian* Bondage Brick-makers, rather then enjoy the pleasures of *Pharaohs* Court; and that which is very remarkable, this was a voluntary choice. The *Israelites* its true, were compelled to their Task; but he in *Pharaohs* Court, the adopted Son of his onely Daughter; and nothing to the Crown it self, thought too much for him, had no manner of restraint lay upon him, onely this Argument before premised; namely, This blessed Load-stone of enjoying God in heavenly places; for saith the Text, he endured or gave his back to all this burden, as seeing him who is invisible; for he had respect to the recompence of reward, others had trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments; they were

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ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder; *others Tortured, not accepting deliverance.* All theſe upon this bleſſed load-ſtone Argument, *That they might obtain a better Reſurrection.*

This in general, but more particularly having reference to the body of this Sign of Decay, which hingeth upon the Paſſion of our bleſſed Lord. Shall the expectation of future Glory thus enamour perſons, that nothing near or dear to them can ſtand in the way but is ſacrificed. And ſhall the ranſom of the Lord; by whom, and through whoſe *Grones* and *Blood* this came, be forgotten, in point of Argument to a holy Converſation. (*God forbid,*) What Mother can look upon the Anguiſh of a Dying Son, and be deſtitute of bitter Reflections? What Child can remember the paſt Travel and Sorrow that did beſet his tender Mother for him in the day when he was Born, and caſt off all Child-like Pity? What Sinner can remember the inward impreſſion of Grief, that once lay upon his Lord in the day, when for the ſinners ſin, the ſeverity of God cauſed (God-Man) the Lord of Life, under the heavie ſtroak and mortal Wound, to cry out, *My Soul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto Death*; and not in the Majeſty of this Argument, give it prevalent acceptance, to deter from Sin, and oblige to Virtue. His Viſage was marred more then any mans; he was deſpiſed and rejected of Men A MAN OF SORROWS, and acquainted with griefs, his Face Spit in, his Hair plucked off, ſtricken, ſmitten and afflicted, bruiſed, wounded, his hands and his feet nailed to the Croſs, a ſpear thruſt through his tender ſide; and ſo great and bitter was the Agony, that lay upon him, that in the anguiſh of his Soul he Sweat, great drops of Blood running down to the ground. and all this poor ſinner for thee and for me,

For he was wounded for our Transgressions, bruised for our Iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and with his Wounds we are healed; all we like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all. Oh! What sinner can make this the object of his Meditation, on one hand, reflecting upon the bitter Cup this Lord drank; on the other hand, reflecting on the subject for whom it was drank; on the third hand, reflecting upon the worthiness of the Person that drank it; and not be melted into Tears, crying, *My Lord, and my God!* Whatsoever thou commandest I will obey, and whereſoever thou sendest me I will go. But I shall speak briefly of these, in order to our Meditation, they being truths well worthy our constant consideration.

And first, For the bitter Cup of sufferings he drank; As never man spake, or did like this Man, so never Man suffered like him from his Birth to his Death, a subject of Sorrows; His first Lodging (though the Son of God) in a Manger, when the Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had Nests, the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his Head, weary with Travelling, sits by a Well, and craves Water, Barley, Bread, and a few Fishes; great Dainties with the King of Glory; in a word, a Man of sorrows to his Death, and that, a Cursed, Painful, Shameful one; taken away by wicked hands, and Slain. And shall not this Meditation deter from sin; for it pleased the Lord to Bruise him, and put him to Grief, else must we have *grieved to all Eternity.*

Secondly, To consider in our hearts for whom he drank this bitter Cup; Come Brother sinner, let us reason together, and look over the black Book of *Heart* and *Life* before Conversion; and read what

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we were, whither a going, with the dreadful Sequel: did not grace take place, when we were without ſtrength; the off-ſpring of *Amorites* and *Hittites in due time Chriſt dyed*; for whom, the ungodly Rebels, Enemies in our minds through wicked *works, haters of God, Covetous, Proud, Boaſters, Inventers of evil things, Traitors, Heady, High-minded, having eyes full of Adultry, feet ſwift to ſhed Blood*; in a word, *Unholy*, and ſo under Wrath. Now for Explication of this ſelf-reflection to ſelf-loathing, and grace-admiring.

Imagine you were arreſted by the hand of Juſtice among Men, and thrown into a loathſom Jail, for a juſt Debt of your own contracting, and there muſt lie and Periſh, being never able to pay: *A Samaritan ſtranger* paſſing by, caſt his eyes upon the Priſon, and through the Iron-grates ſees a man half ſtarved, clothed in Rags; begging the Charity of Strangers as they paſs by; this *Samaritan* draws nearer, ſaying, Poor Man! What is thy Crime? Ah Sir! I am like to lie and a periſh for a Debt I am never able to pay; Water and Bread, Lice and Rags is my beſt Companions, bare Boards, and a little Straw; my Lodging in a moſt noiſom Room; I have not had one Morſel of Freſh-meat this ſeven Weeks, except part of a *Maggot-eaten Sheeps-head*; if you will Mr. pleaſe to give me a ſmall Snip of Money, I ſhall pray for you all the days of my miſerable Life, which I pray God may not be many more; for I long to be in the Grave, *&c.* Now at this ſight and Speech, the Stranger takes pity of him, ſaying, Poor Man! I ſee thou art in a miſerable condition; Suppoſe I ſhould ſend for thy Creditor, and diſcharge the Debt, and put Cloaths on thy Back, and take thee home to my Houſe, and make thee my ſerving-man, to Rub my Horſe-heels,

and

and tend my Hogs; wilt thou thankfully accept this offer? Yes Mr. withall my Soul; thus the Debt is discharged, the Prisoner released; his Rags cast away, his Belly and Back clothed, and Home he is carried, and a sweet Lodging provided; and how thankful he is for all these Mercies. Let the Reader judge: But further, Imagining you were pursued by Hue and Cry for Robbery, and Murder, and being ceased, thrown into a Dungeon, your Hands and Feet shakled with Irons, at the day of general-assize, out you are brought to the Bar, there Arraigned, found Guilty, Condemned; the day of Execution appointed, the Minister sent to acquaint you therewith, and he exhorts to a sense and sorrow for these bloody Crimes. Now the Hands are Wrung, the Heart Smit on, the looks Ghastly, in comes the aged Father and Mother, wringing their hands, with Rivers of Tears running down their eyes, so big with Grief that they cannot speak one word; now the Son goes to meet them, but can scarce move for the Soreness, and weight of the Irons, yet falls down at their Feet, begs their Pardon, and prayers for his Soul, that with the dolefulness of the Prison, noise, and sight of the Irons, remembrance of the bloody Crimes; and that Wednesday next is the day of Execution, and this is Monday; this their Son, and he must be Hanged up by the Neck till Dead, at last their Speech is recovered, and thus breaks forth the sorrowful Mother, Oh Son! Would God I had never born thee, or seen thee carryed to thy Grave, as soon as thou camest into the World; before half her complaint, sighs and tears is uttered, in comes the Condemned Mans Wife, and seven small Children, She looks upon the Husband, they look upon the Father. And now Grandfather and Grandmother, Wife and the Children, and the Malefactor, power out

out such Floods of Tears and hideous Cries, and Lamentation, that even melts the Jailor into Sorrow, and causeth Anguish to fall upon the Minister, almost to fainting at such dreadful Spectacles. But while all are thus beset with Grief; in comes a Passenger, awakened at the doleful Cry, to enquire what is the matter, at which, the Minister being somewhat recovered, makes relation; upon which, the Stranger moved with Compassion to see the Eies of the ancient Father and Mother, the Wife and small Children swelled with Sorrow, and the Malefactor in Irons, smiting upon his Breast, lifting up his Eies and Hands for Mercy, resolves with himself, and thus he speaketh to the Prisoner; Though I never saw thy Face before, but passing as a Stranger by, and hearing such a lamentable Cry, and beholding now such deep anguish beset thy Relations, at this thy despicable condition, am moved in my Heart, to part with all my worldly Estate to seek thy Pardon, or lay down my own Life for thy Transgression. Is not this news as welcome as *Lazarus* from the Grave; and how thankful for all this, is the Malefactor? Let the Reader judge.

But Brother sinner, these Narratives do not the tithe reach our Case, though indeed they are Doleful; and the unmerited kindness of these two Strangers, without Parallel, and the Subjects that received them, for ever obliged to be Servants, yea Vassels or Scullions to them. For we for our Transgressions have not only deserved Death temporal, but eternal, but for ever to abide in Hell, gnawing our Tongues for Pain. And if this kindness shewed by these Strangers, doth deserve Thankfulness and Service; What shall we render to Jesus Christ, that came from Heaven his dwelling place; and in this sinful World, *took upon him the form of a Servant, humbled himself, and became obedient*

dient unto a shameful, painful Death; for he was made Sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Shall not this Grace for ever call upon us, to be in a constant inward Meditation of the greatness of this Love, with self-reflection, and a hearty affectionate return of all possible Humble and thankful obedience for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Doth not this severely reprehend those Christians that are frequent in the practice of that Institution of our Lord, that calls for this remembrance of his Death, till he come the second time without sin to Salvation; whose thoughts of a dying Jesus, and what a Glorious Person he is, and what a Glorious State he left, and for what a contemptible People all this was; and yet not in true filial fear, and love-reliance and dependance, be so much united to him, as a Vassel is to his Prince, or bond-slave to his Master. Now if the reading of these Lines, hath taken so much impression, as to make our Hearts burn within us, into this melting question.

Quest. What shall I do that the thoughts of a dying Jesus for my sins, may not onely be constant, but prevalent to perswade me to a most Christ-like Conversation?

Answ. 1. Be fervent and constant in Prayer unto Jesus, to help your Understandings, with a true sight of the Glory of his Person, and the Magnitude of his Passion.

2. Give up your selves to fixed times of solemn Meditation of the Person and Passion of Jesus Christ, this being too much a novelty among Professors (with Sorrow be it spoken.) I shall briefly explain it; namely, that you deliberately ponder, and with some faithful experienced Christian, advise how often every year under your circumstances, you ought in Honour

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to God, and Love to your Soul keep a day, or such a part of that day, in such a retired place, with such a frame of Spirit, onely in Meditation on the Person and Passion of your Lord; my Soul for thine, thus doing Devoutly, Constantly, and in fervent Prayer, the Profit will be unspeakable.

3. Keep up also a constant remembrance of *past-offences*, and *personal-frailties*; And the Good Lord give his Blessing. *Amen.*

CAAP. XXXIX

Demonstrating, that in every Man there is a Master-sin, which must be Killed, *or it will* Kill; *and how in process of Time, this once* LOTHED, *may come to be again* LIKED, *with eight Steps, by which it gradually gets new admittance, and four Causes assigned of this Decay, and a necessity asserted of our Mortal Enmity to all Sin.*

SIGN: XXXIX

When you can remember past sins committed, rather with Liking then Lothing.

By past sins here, I would be understood to intend and mean those sins the Scripture calls right Eye, or right Hand sins, that is, such sins as in time past had the sole Dominion and Government over us, to which we yielded up our Bodies as Servants do to their Masters, or Children to their Parents. *And that there is such a thing in the world, or body of Man as chief, or a master-sin*, may be very proper to speak somewhat unto

in

this place; *And in process of time after this sin hath received a deadly wound by way of abhorrency, it may come to receive some healing again, or be remembred with liking rather then loathing*, may also be very useful to speak something unto under this head, with some causes assigned *how and why this comes to pass*, and some remedies *how this may be cured* where begun, *or prevented* whereabout to come. Now to the first thing premised, whether there is or not such a thing in the world (or Body of Man) as some sin that hath Rule and Government in chief, that is, That although every Man in his unregenerate state hath many sins unto which he payeth homage, yet these very sins have as it were a leading or Master sin that doth command in Chief; as there is many *Devils*, so there is a *Belzebub* or Prince of *Devils*, and as there is many *humours* in the body of Man, so there is some one *predominant* humour, *Blood*, *Flegm*, *Cholar*, *Melancholy*, are the parts of which we all partake, yet some one of these in all men have a chief propriety; And hence it comes to pass from the predominancy of our Constitutions. These lead us out to affect most some particular *Sin*; For though it is true, wicked Men love all *Sin* as it suits with Interest and Inclication, yet they set a *chief love* upon that Sin as falls most under their natural *Constitution*; We repute not a Man to be of such a Trade, because he now and then in an Artists shop may use that Artists Tools, but because he is wholly addicted thereunto: Hence we call such a man a Carpenter, Bricklayer, Ironmonger, *&c.* because each of these are given up by way of constancy thereunto; one is constant about his Timber, the other his Bricks, the other in Mettles. In like manner, wicked men in Scripture take their denomination of being called such a sinner, as a *Drunkard*, *Fornicator*, *Swearer*, *Lyar*, &c. not because they

they have no other sin, for that were preposterous to imagine, that such as *Drunkards*, *Fornicators*, *Swearers* and *Liars*, had not many more sins; but it is because all other sins are as their *Sculion-boys* to these Master-*sins*; And were the Scripture is silent, experience sufficiently teacheth this, that as in matter of Meats and Drinks, though in the general we have a common affection to all that God hath ordained for food; Yet one man hath a more special respect to this or that meat, some *flesh*, some *fish*; and in the same little family, one child hath a *Joseph* or *Benjamins* part, though the rest of the Children are not thereby exempted from a child-like affection; And as in our natural body, to some members we attribute more care, as they are more useful, and their loss more painful, hence it comes to pass that without any premeditation the Hand (though as truly a part of the Body) yet will receive the blow to secure the Head, as being a more noble part, without which, Nature tells us, the rest of the Body cannot subsist; hence it comes to pass, that as our experience tells us, some Men are naturally more *inclined to Drunkenness* then any other sin, others to *Covetousness*, others to *Pride*, others to *Uncleanness*, others to *Idleness*, others to *Talkativeness*, others to *Passion*, &c. and these may most properly be called the members of our Bodies, the right Eye, or right Hand; thus *David* had his *Absalom*, *Sampson* his *Dalilah*, *Herod* his *Herodias*, *Judas* his *Bag*, &c. How evident is it in Scripture, let the considerate Reader judge? That when once the awakening Spirit of Conviction came to any Sinner, it lead him, to search out, and cry most against that Sin of all other, apprehending that as the Ring-leader of all the Rebellion; and this is noted in Scripture with this Brand, *right Hand sin*, *right Eye sin*; *Ah mine Iniquity!*

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his own Iniquity, his own Sickness, his own Sore, the Plague of his own Heart. Mat. 25. 29, 30. 2 Sam. 22. 24. 1 Kings 8. 38. 2 Chron. 6. 29. In like manner, from the very influence of the constitution persons naturally are addicted to one predominant Virtue more then other; *Moses* for his Meekness, *Job* for his Patience; Who of a more fiery persecuting Spirit then *Saul*; but so soon as his Heat and Choler was turned into the right Channel, who more zealous, labouring more abundantly then the rest, went more Journeys, through more Perils, writ more Epistles, endured more Deaths, as himself saith, *in Deaths often*, as the 2*d. of Cor.* 11. 23, 24. to the last, at large declares; by all which it may evidently teach us, that certainly we have our chief Corruption or Master-lust. I never met with a Convert in my days, but would knowingly confess he knew his Master-sin; and that one Devil did more predominant in him then the rest of the Legion, and was the object of his Sorrow, Prayers and Fears, more then any other sin; and indeed there is a cause; for generally the right Eye sin is of such affinity, that it even Sociates in the capacity of a member of the same Body.

And this brings me to the next thing premised, that this Master-sin, in process of time, may be remembred with liking, that is, upon reflection of past sinful Acts, not to have such manner of Indignation, Zeal and Revenge, as had been in their espousal day. This is the first Step or In-let, to renew acquaintance with an old Enemy; and at this Door, hath many a poor Soul, admitting of a parley with, what they ought to have fled from, made good the Apostles words, *The Dog is turned to his Vomit again, and the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire.* If once a right Eye sin, through the Devils Subtilty,

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and our omission to watchfulness, can but gain so much credit in the estimation of that Christian, out of whose heart it was formerly cast. This will be a fairer overture to bring about these eight gradual dangers, step by step to get new possession, and may end in mortal War.

First, To suggest that there is not such a necessity of that utter estrangedness as hath been for a long time; Thus much ground given, lets the Enemy into the outmost works; and now having gained a better opinion in the mind then was, attempts a second step, and that is to put the declining Christian, upon ruminating or entertaining into the fancy, some delectable thoughts of a certain kind of Pleasure, or Profit in renewing this acquaintance; and from hence, sin gains a third step, and that is, consent of the Will; by this time the Field is more then half won, and a strong Combate is now working, the two Powers Light and Darkness. Yet ten to one, but the will is carried Captive, partly complying, partly refraining, the Charms of Sin offering present encouragement. Now doth the external senses, yeild their utmost help to damp Faith, and quicken Sense; Ah! By this means Sin gains a fourth step, and that is, to turn consent into Action; and now with our first Mother, admitting the Tree, pleasant to the Eye, and profitable to make wise; she takes of the Fruit, and Eats, Transgresseth, that is, turns consent into Act; this was the way the Devil took with *Achan*, he first looks upon the accursed thing as Goodly, from thence consented and acted; by admitting sin at first to take these steps, ground is gained to a fifth, sixth and seventh, that is, a reitterating the same Act, into Acts, or a Custom; and then into glorying or turning Acts and Rebukes, into *Solomons* com-

plaint. *Prov.* 14. 9. Fools make a mock at Sin. And this leads to Obduration, or hard-Heartedneſs, and without a Miracle, ends in final impenitency, from which, Good Lord deliver us. *Amen.*

How weary once was *Iſrael* of the Land of *Egypt*, and groned under the Bondage of their Task-maſters, as appears by the word of truth. *Exod.* 3. 7. *And the Lord ſaid, I have ſeen the affliction of my People which are in* Egypt, *and have heard their cry by reaſon of their Task-maſters, for I know their Sorrows.* God that ſaw this did deliver them, *by a mighty ſtrong Hand he brought them out*, of which they were full glad; yet in proceſs of time, begin to change their opinion, and forget the bitterneſs of their ſinful Bondage ſaying. *Numb.* 11. 5, 6. *We remember the Fiſh which we did eat in* Egypt *freely, the Cucumbers, and the Melons, and the Leeks, and the Onions, but now our Soul is dried away, there is nothing at all beſides this Mannah before our eyes.* Here they ſlight Angels Food of Gods providing, hankering after their old Bondage again; fulfilling the Decay in this Sign, as witneſſeth that grievous complaint. *Ezek.* 23. 21. *Thus thou calledſt to remembrance the lewdneſs of thy Youth, in bruiſing thy Teats by the* Egyptians, *for the Paps of thy Youth.* Iſrael is aweary of God and his Proviſion, ſaying, *Let us make a Captive, and return into* Egypt *again*; *Nevertheleſs, I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt Love.* Rev. 2. 4. 11.

Queſt. What may be the Cauſes of this Decay, that *paſt ſins* which was once our Sickneſs, and Sore, may in proceſs of time, gain better reputation in our Hearts.

Anſw. Firſt, Forgetfulneſs of that pinching Bondage, ſin in times paſt brought upon us. Secondly, Our

not considering the Sting that still remains in sin, or that there is in the nature of it a constant enmity, both against God and the Soul. Thirdly, Our unsensibleness of the woeful Issue that will attend the renewing Friendship with Sin. Fourthly, Our not keeping daily in our account, in its Authority the great day of our account. But something to these Causes in order.

And first, Our forgetfulness of that pinching Bondage, sin in times past brought upon us. This may appear by but calling to mind, the Servile, Slavery and Drudgery it put us upon before Conversion, while *we served divers lusts, yielding our members Servants to all unrighteousness, adding Iniquity to Iniquity.* In our right Wits we should take it with the highest of Indignation, to have inseparably fastened to us a dead mans Body, to carry up and down the Stench and Lothsomeness of it whersoever we went, at Bed and Board, Court and Camp: such company would render us unmeet company for a Dog, and in it self, more tedious then Death it self; (to us) yet he that trades in sin, is worse beset with worse Lothsomeness, though with the man in the *Proverbs, he knoweth not that the Dead are there, and that her Guests are in the depths of Hell.* Lets but call to remembrance when we lived in Drunkenness or Uncleanness, *&c.* how sin did debauch and unman us; how many fowl unbeastlike Acts did this Monster SIN Carry us, as so many chained Captives after its filthy Lusts? Do we not upon consideration, loath the very thoughts, and are ashamed even to name the things done then in secret? Oh! The rottenness and *Egyptian* Diseases that Sin hath brought upon us; besides, did we not in this state, mock at God, his Servants and Services, being so followed with an accusing conscience, that

we durst not leave one Sermon of Death, Judgment, Heaven, or Hell; Oh Christian! It is forgetfulness of this, gives sin fresh encouragement to give the new visits, but remember, and the good Lord help thee to remember, though the Cup it presents thee with be gilt, the Liquor in it is mortal Poison.

Secondly, Our not considering the Sting that still remains in sin, or that there is in the nature of it a constant Enmity both against God and the Soul. It is a high piece of deceit wherewith the Devil Trades, as to the Garment put upon sin, as if there were some real pleasure, or real profit in sin, and its Service; neither so Bitter, nor its end so Painful; Who such a Fool as to be perswaded Fire will not Burn us, nor Water Drown u? or believes he can make a League with it, not to hurt him? Is not Fire, *Fire still*? Is not Water, *Water still*? Hath the Sea lost its property, cast thy self upon its proud Waves, or into burning Flames, and try if neither can touch thee? Is not Poison, *Poison still*; because we fancy otherwise? Alas! Alas! Doth not the best of Laws tell us, that this Monster *Sin*, is enmity against God, not capable of changing its nature, and so under no possibility of accepting any terms of Peace. Is it not impossible to make Fire and Oyle dwell together, one must overcome; there is no way to remove this Enmity, but by killing of it, many have thought of killing Sin, by yielding to sin, or killing Greater, by yielding to a Lesser; like the rebellious Son, tempted daily by the Devil to be Drunk, murder his Father, and ravish his Mother; he makes terms with this Enmity, to avoid the two last, submits to the first, which was but a making provision for the Flesh with the more boldness to run into the rest. We think when we take the Devils councel, we may put out the Fire, by adding

ding Fewel; while God saith, Who is Love it self? *touch not, taste not, handle not, pass not by it, turn from it, pass another way*; whether the Devil in sin, *smile* or *frown*, the Enmity is the same. Oh that this were more considered by Professors! It would animate them more with Enmity against this Enmity.

Thirdly, Our unsensibleness of the woeful Issue that will attend the renewing friendship with sin. It had been better never to have known the ways of God, then afterwards to depart from the Holy Commandment; such a state doth greatly aggravate our condemnation; for it leaves us without all manner of excuse. He that never knew better, being not so blame-worthy, as such that knew their Masters will, and did contrary. And this experience gives a woeful account of, saying, the relapsed Disease in the natural body, seldom or never comes but with mortal conquest. In like manner, who so audacious in the acts of sin, as that man that once had escaped its old pollutions. Give our blessed Lord leave to speak here, *When once the unclean Spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none; then he saith, I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other Spirits more wicked then himself, and they enter in, and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse then the first.* One Devil bore rule before, imagining it were the Devil of envy. Now Seven worse Devils hath this one Devil brought with him, the man was envious once, and had got the mastry over it; but took no good heed to keep his ground in Gods way, and with Gods strength, in process of time, lost the sense of that bitter fruit, this

root of envy had brought forth; now the same man is become a Monster, not barely Envious, but *Implacable*, *Proud*, given to *Whoredom*, *Drunkenness*, *Idolatry*, *Covetousness*, *Blasphemy*. Now all past Convictions, Acknowledgments, Remorse, Sense and sorrow for sin in times past, is turned into Stupidity, and Impenitency, a making light or mock at God, turning Bruitish; *For whoso doth such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Rev. 21. 8. *But shall have their part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death*; from which implacapable estate, the good Lord deliver us. *Amen.*

Fourthly, Our not keeping daily in our account, (in its authority) the great day of our account, is the great cause why we can remember past sins, ratherwith liking then lothing. Professors now a days, content themselves with the bare notion of the *Judgment day to come*, little pondering how great it is, and how near it is; did we as much concern our selves about this mighty truth, as the man that hath a *gangrened Arm* to be sawed off from his Body, doth concern himself how he may be fitted for it, and bear the anguish of the Act, and loss of the Limb, it would have more Authority upon our Hearts and Lives, to believe that we shall certainly give an account of all our deeds done in this Body, whether good or bad, is one main principle of the Christian Faith; and to be ignorant that this account must be very shortly given, is our sin; for the time is at hand: for Space, it is but a moment, and for pace, it is but two Steps we have to take, the first into the Grave, and that will be shortly, *for the Time is short*, at Night this Step will be taken; the second Step is to be taken when we awake, and that is in the Morning. Oh! How little did the man in the Gospel dream, that his Sun was so near being set

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(this day) *Son take thine ease, eat, Drink, and be merry: Thou Fool, this night shall thy life be taken from thee.* Can we say welcome to Deaths knock; I am ready and did wait for this call to be carried to the Judgment, my accounts are stated, mine house set in order, my stewardship ended. Now Death brings me before the Throne of God, and of the Lamb, that I may hear that blessed voyce, *Thou hast been faithful over a few Talents, I will make thee ruler over many Cities*; Oh! Lets lay our hands upon our mouths, and ponder inwardly and Constantly, what a moment of time doth yet remain, and that there is but two paces to step ere we be in *Eternity*; for when they shall say (even Professors) *peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as Travel upon a woman with Child, and they shall not escape.* 1 Thes. 5. 3.

It is a Sovereign remedy against Temptations, to the most alluring Lust, instead of consenting to carry the assaults, as already acted, to the Judgment-seat, and ask how they will look, and what speak in that day. Surely did but the high-way Man, call first a Court in his own Conscience, and there arraign, condemn, and execute the sentence of Death upon the Malefactor; it would cool his courage; and by Gods blessing prove effectual to betake himself to another kind of Life; such as might give him courage to look the most severe Judge in the Face with Joy; Doubtless had *Zimri* and *Cosbi*, spent more of their Meditation in the court of their own Conscience; what would be the consequence of that their filthy sin, and less upon the object of bruitish sense, they would surely have chosen a sick bed to weep on, rather then a bed of Down to Solace on, its grateful to the Devil, and prepares grateful baits for sense to put Judgment, or the day of our account farthest off, when the tem-

cation is neareſt. I ſhall conclude all with that bleſſed word of the holy Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 5. 9, 10, 11. *Wherefore we labour, that whether preſent or abſent we may be accepted of God; for we muſt all appear before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad; knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we perſwade men:* From this mighty conſideration the Lord God perſwade our minds to be given up to a conſtant Meditation, while it's called to day, that the day of our account will certainly and ſhortly appear: And ſo I paſs to the Fourtieth and laſt Sign of Decay in Godlineſs.

CHAP. XL.

Calling for grave Conſiderations when we accompany our Neighbours to the Grave; alſo proving Death rightly ſtiled the King of Terrours by three Arguments; and that it is a ſad ſymptome of decay in Godlineſs, when the ſight of Death is not laid to heart, aſſigning three cauſes of our not laying it to heart; with ſeven ſhort Practical Hints to a laſting recovery.

SIGN XL.

When you can ſee ſpectacles of mortality carrying to their long home, and be as practically unconcerned, as though your ſelves were exempted from the like ſtate of mortality.

The

The great Concern of the *Judgement day to come*, *Heaven*, and *Hell*, reſts upon the Authority of our Faith, as to any obliging influence, to a good heart and life; and from hence it becomes ſo little our onely concern in matter of due preparation, leſt we miſs the benefit, and meet the woe, *ATHEISME* having ſo great a ſhare of room in our hearts; and here the Devil hath the more room to play his pranks, and gain credit for his allurements, his trade lying altogether in *preſent things*, which to *ſenſe* are moſt prevalent, eſpecially in conjunction with Pleaſure and Profit, deſired and [illegible]inted by the Tempter to our conſtitution, in which he is always careful to prepare meet baits for a *feaſting* or *faſting* condition. A man naturally inclined to Drunkenneſs, ſhall not want that ſenſitive Devil to attend every motion; Sir, here is good ware and clear, what will you buy? And if to Uncleanneſs you be inclined, he will paint a Harlots Forehead, with this ſaying, *Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning, let us ſolace our ſelves with lovers*; there is nothing lies in the way, I have drawn the Curtain between the light of *Judgment*, *Heaven*, and *Hell* that cannot ſee us; for *the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey*, Prov. 7. 18, 19. *Thus with much fair ſpeech* the ſenſes are prevaled upon, to them *ſtoln waters being ſweet, and bread eaten in ſecret pleaſant*; while we ſee not, *that the dead are there, and that her gueſts are in the depths of Hell*: No Councel being called in the Court of *Conſcience*, what ſhall the end of theſe things be? Hence Sathan carries us captive, till a dart ſtrike through our Liver, as a bird haſteth to the ſnare, not knowing it is for its life.

But

But because we shall not want a witness for God in our own Conscience, that may even suit as prevalent with our senses, to summon us into a strict examination about our hereafter state, the Wisdom of Heaven hath ordained, that man shall die even *as it is appointed for men once to die, but after this the judgment*, Heb. 9. 27. Hence comes it to pass, that lest at any time we should let the practical part of this Doctrine slip out of our minds, God presents us with spectacles of Mortality every day; for as soon as our Pallate hath tasted the meat, it is past [illegible] into *Deaths Chambers*, and we see it in the Kitchen no more; which to a Wise man in the Contemplation, may yield more honey for his imitation, then the Bee can get from the sweetest flower for its Winters nourishment: Yet because this Meditation may not pierce enough, that every day other Creatures loseth their lives to preserve ours, and we not onely *feed Death*, but truly *feed upon Death*; it pleaseth God in his inestimate love to our everlasting good to beset our senses even with yet nigher concerns; for such a Prince, that in his Royal Apparel sate upon the Throne but the other day, we now see carried to a place of *Rottenness* and dead mens *Sculls*, there to be entombed a companion for Worms, till the *Judgment day*, when all that are in their Graves shall come forth, some to the *Resurrection of Life*, *and some to the Resurrection of Damnation*; with which Reflection Kings and Beggars ought to behold spectacles of Mortality. But because this thought may not be too remote, God pleaseth to admonish us daily by the objects of our intimatest Acquaintance; and lest that should not sufficiently prove our concern, at last comes home to our Bed-side, taking captive

our

our *Husband, Wife, Child*, or *Servant*, that we seeing them go before us from our arms into a Pit, whither we must also follow shortly, and at such a Providence not to be awakened with all diligence to make ready, having our loins girt about, and our lights burning, as those that know this sensibly, that their Lord is coming: Oh it's but a while e're we shall hear the Midnight-cry, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, *Trim your Lamps, trim your Lamps*; every days morsel gives hints of this, every Death-bed Relation speaks no less: But to see the mighty brought down, the tall stoop, and the strong become as flax, eyes grow gastly, hands feeble, joynts trembling, beauty turning into rottenness, because man goeth to his long home, and the Mourners going about the streets, may not this be read with lamentation, while we reflect upon this weighty object, that is so visible to our sence, and we as practically unconcerned, as though we from the like state of Mortality were exempted.

Is not this manifest, that even while we are present, and following the *Corpse* to the *Grave*, our Communications, Gestures, and Meditations bespeaks us earthly, sensual, and devilish, *James* 3. 15. What meaneth else, that aforehand we care to trim and adorn our worms meat with the best outside we can attain or come at, while barren to think what doth God by this *teach my soul*; Oh the levity and excess where opportunity is given; the impertinent *discourse*, the distance from *gravity*, the *swelling Pride* and *Ostentation* shewing it self, ready to crave and contend for with disdain a chief seat, as if so *solemn* a service, of all others the most solemn, were a Theatre to shew our antick fashions, gay

gay trimming, and popular applause, rather then a vertuous soul: When should we more manifest our Crucifiction to this World by the Cross of our Lord, then while we behold the *Mother weeping* for an onely Son, *seven* Children weeping bitterly to part with so dear a Father and Mother, whose place they must now know no more, and with their persons converse no more: *Oh death where's thy sting, Oh grave where is thy victory?* I am made a Widow, I fatherless, motherless, childless this day; *Oh Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had dyed for thee, my son, my son.* Now for spectacles of Mortality to be but like a fit of Tooth-ach, no longer remembred, but while the anguish lasteth: These things premised, are certain marks of a dead state, or deep *decay* in *Godliness*, and may seasonably call upon us to enquire.

Quest. What may be the causes of such stupidity under so immediate a concern, as to behold the feet of them that carry my neighbour to the place of darkness to day, must fetch me (as it were) to morrow to the same place.

Answer 1. Looking too slightly at so weighty an object, or a not laying it to heart.

2ly. Omission, to consider how much greater the change shortly will be, that now must follow this great change.

3ly. Inward or hidden Atheism.

First, looking too slightly at so weighty an object, or a not laying it to heart.

Death is not called the *King* of *Terrours* in vain; for it is in it self terrible in three great respects.

First, It comes upon a terrible message, and doth terrible execution where it fixeth, and carries all the living to a place of *terrible darkness*; it leaves

King-

Kingdoms without *Kings*, Cities without *Magistrates*, Houses without *Inhabitants*, Children without *Parents*, and is accompanied in all its Travels with *Lamentations, and mourning, and woe.*

Secondly, It is terrible, because it spares none where ever it comes, *old or young, rich or poor, free or bond, child or suckling:* If you are white with *age* and experience, go you must; if green with *youth* or childhood, stay you cannot. *Jacob* that could *wrestle* with God, could not out-wrestle *Death. Absalom* could not out-ride it, nor *Pharaoh*, that in the heat of his lust speaks, saying, *I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lusts shall be satisfied*, yet could not out-drive Death. The Wisdom of *Solomon*, the Strength of *Samson*, the Riches of *Dives*, must all wither before this *terrible one*; if the safety of a Kingdom depend upon the life of the King, the hopes of a Family, the fame of a Pedigree, the foundation of Riches or Learning, yet down goes all by this *Sythe of Death.* In our *memory*, they that *conquered Princes*, and made the Nations *tremble*, are now lodged in *silence*, and cannot contend with a *grasshopper*: He that but the other day by power or policy conquered a famous Army, and brought about as strange a change, yet now lodgeth in a place of *Rottenness* and *dead mens Sculls. I* that have written this, and YOU that now are *reading* this, *must, must* all shortly go off the Stage, and turn into *dust.* But,

Thirdly, It is terrible, because it admits of no Ransome; if a King would give his Kingdom, if a General would give his Army, the onely hopes of the famousest Family that ever the world had, cannot offer a sufficient *hostage: Oh Death, thou art terrible.* Thou once camest in a Famine upon the

Land

Land of *Egypt*, and though they could not there perpetuate life, yet but to adde days, they became thy bondſ-men, bleed, ſweat, purge, vomit, flye from City to Countrey, from Countrey to Camp, from Camp to Cottage, from Cottage to a Dunghill; *Skin for skin, yea all we have we will give for a life*: Gen. 47. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. read and conſider. *And there was no bread in all the Land, for the famine was very ſore; ſo that the Land of Egypt, and all the land of Canaan fainted by reaſon of the famine; and Joſeph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought; and Joſeph brought the money into Pharaohs houſe: And when the money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joſeph, and ſaid, Give us bread, for why ſhould we die in thy preſence?* (mark that) *for the money faileth: And Joſeph ſaid, Give your cattle, and I will give you bread for your cattle, if money fail; and they brought their cattle unto Joſeph: And Joſeph gave them bread in exchange for horſes, and for their flocks, and for the cattle of their herds, and for the aſſes; and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year: When that year was ended, they came unto him the ſecond year, and ſaid unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is ſpent, my lord alſo hath our herds of cattle, there is not ought left in the ſight of my lord, but our bodies and our lands; wherefore ſhall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be ſervants unto Pharaoh; and give us ſeed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not deſolate.* Here is remarkible that Purchaſe from the *King* of *TERROURS* but a little reſpite, (for at laſt dye they muſt.) Firſt,

First, They drain all the Money throughout the Land of *Egypt*, that goes for bread, to keep life a little longer: When that is gone, then

Secondly, They sacrifice their Horses, Flocks, Cattle, and Asses, to keep life a little longer; Oh *Death*, thou art the *Terrible one*, will not this do?

Thirdly, Then comes skin for skin, our money is spent, my Lord also hath our Herds of Cattle, we have nothing left but our Lands and our Bodies, why should we dye before thine eyes? buy us and our Land for Bread; but nothing can perpetuate life, our all at most can but a little adde minutes to our few frail days! Oh the sighing, wringing of hands, smiting on the breast, wailing in the streets, that this *Terrible* Messenger causeth! *Woe*, *woe*, *woe*, take my all, spare but my *Isaack*, I will beg with him at a Grate, rather then feast without him at a Pallace: Take a limb, spare but the life; then we cry, Come, come away Physician for Christs sake, do your utmost, and make what conditions you will, save but life, the *Lading* never so costly, and fetched from far, all the *Sayls* and *Tackle*, yea, and *Ship* it self, let go to preserve a little longer respite from this *King* of *Terrours*! Oh Christians, you look too *slightly* at this *weighty object*, that are no more practically reformed by the sight of it: If in good earnest you would live to God while frail life lasteth, look through the Glass of your *dead neighbour* into your *own death*; you see him to day, but must see him no more; and the same *messenger* will *knock shortly* at your *door*. Let the meditation of this object sink deep into your hearts, unless the common end of the *sight* will quit you from the *taste*, let it not rob you of the practical *sense*; lay to heart what you see, commune with it upon your bed,

bed, converse with it whithersoever you go, to *fast*, or *feast*; ever praying with good *Job*, *Lord teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart to true wisdom.* Amen.

But secondly, A second cause why we are no more practically concerned, may be this, Omission, to consider how much greater the change will shortly be, that now must follow this great change! Is the *Servant* thus great, how great then is the *Master*? Is the *Harbinger* so great, how great then is the *Prince*? Is the Forlorn-hope so *terrible*, how *terrible* then is the whole Army? Doth *Death* depopulate Kingdoms, turn the world into a *Chaos*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* into a *Flame*, *Beauty* into *Rottenness*, a Lyon into contempt, a King into ashes: How terrible then must *Deaths DEATH* be? while the first is but the fore runner of the last: Is the one *certainly Terrible*, the next that follows, is then *irrepairably TERRIBLE*; one carries us from a temporal *Pain* to a temporal *Pit*; the other carries us from this *Pit* to an *ETERNAL PAIN*, *where the worm shall never cease gnawing, and the fire shall never cease burning.* Do we now see wringings of hands, shakings of heads, tremblings of joynts, fearfulness of spirits, anguish of soul! Death being but the in-let into a worse place; for the lofty that now saith to God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy Law*: There is but two staces to follow Death, but Oh how weighty are they! one worth all our study to know it in the joys of it, the other worth all our meditation to avoid it in the woes of it: Can you pass to the Grave side, and behold your neighbour laid in it, taken from his bed of *Down*, laid in his bed of *Dust*, and not be heart-full with Consideration,

tion, saying, Is this great work the last, or shall the Judgment follow after this, and *Heaven* or *Hell* after that? Heed and meditate what the Spirit saith, *Rev.*20.11.12.15. *And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sate upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works: And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, saying to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Chap. 6. 15, 16, 17. As sure as now we read this, we shall hear and see this; yea, and except timely laid to heart, shall also *feel* this. If the Heavens be all full of blackness, we ask the meaning, if terrible *Thunder* and *Lightning*, or the earth full of *Barrenness*, or the City full of *Flames*, or its Inhabitants full of *Deaths*; or if we hear the noise of Cannon like Thunder and Lightning, we ask, What is the matter; and shall we see Mourners go about the streets carrying him to his long home, to be lodged with worms, that but the other day sate upon a stately Throne in great and *terrible Majesty*, and not reflect that we shall follow, and what will follow after? Do we undertake a *War*, and not count our *Strength*? Or

do we build a House and not consider the Cost; or do we take a long and dangerous Voyage by Sea, and not foresee the casualties? *The wise foresee the evil, and hide themselves*; Do we know to Death we owe a debt, and he will shortly knock at our door, and call us to deliver up our Captives, and shall we not ask what will come after? Will not *Ignorance* here prove *Damnation*, and are we unconcerned? Oh! the lifting and labouring, and running hither and thither to save our own House from burning, when we see our neighbours House on Fire? do we thus for *Temporals*, and shall we do less for *Eternals*? do we thus for a Body, and shall we do less for a Soul? *Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*, Luke 21. 35.

But Thirdly, A third Cause why we can see Spectacles of Mortality carrying to their long whom, and be as practically unconcerned, as though from the like state we were exempted may be this, Inward or Hidden Atheism.

The grand design of the Devil in all Ages, is to keep persons from the knowledge of God, or at least, so to conceive, and comprehend him, as to pay no religious Reverence to his being, and soverignty over Mankind; There are two things seeks to bear each contrary rule in Man, the one is Reason, the other is Sense. The first of these, in its Authority having dominion, leads us out into a rational enquiry, into the original or first Cause of all things; and this brings to the acknowledgment of a Deity. The last of these, Man is most familiar with, and apteſt to be led by: Hence it comes to pass so many in the world turn Brutish, living onely after the dictates of sense, and even in the best of men, & in the best of their services to a Deity there

will not some mixtures of inward or hidden Atheism be wanting; for in the *Corinth* Church, some had not the knowledge of God in the right notion of it; but upon visibles, had no further object or end; Hence one is of *Paul*, and another of *Apollo*, a third of *Cephas*, thus turning the life of Religion into outside chiefly, being led by the prevalency of sense, which is that that keeps Reason under Bondage; we see every day the Beasts of the field seek their food, and having found it, live upon it, never further making enquiry, how or whence it came; this sense teacheth, but God hath endued man with a more noble faculty of understanding, which puts him upon this great enquiry.

How things come to be in the posture they now are, and whether they had beginning, and from what cause. By this way of giving Reason its full scope, we come to enquire into the truth and original of our being, how and whence it was, and come to understand the Author of our being; and this leads us into an enquiry into the ends wherefore we were made, whether as the Beasts, onely to Eat and Drink, and Sleep, and Die, and so no more, or whether the Author of our being, did not design some nobler end in our Creation.

Thus First, Being rationally satisfied that our being is from God; we from hence are necessitated to grant God hath the like part and property in us, to govern and dispose, as we account in Reason and Justice we have in whatsoever we truly make and are the original of; Hence every man lays claim and propriety to his own, to dispose and order after the intent of its original, and would men but give Reason its full exercise, God would gain more ground; and Sense the door of Atheism, be more kept in the station God

designed it too. Reason being a noble principle that will know as that man is, so what man is, and wherefore; and this sight of mans rationality, brings him also to a sense and feeling of his own frailty. Hence seeing Mortality is writ in his Fore-head; and that in process of time, he must come to be sick and die; and not onely leave his noble parts but also his atchievements, or fruits of all his Travel, and labour in the World. By these means men come to enquire into the nature of that death or annihilation which doth befall them, and whether it shall be eternal or not.

Thus Religion gains ground upon the rational part of mankind, and Atheism is kept under; and this brings not only a Deity into reverence and adoration, but what helps or means soever this Deity hath afforded, are sought after with inward desire to the fullest attainment possible. Thus the holy Scripture, where met with, are had in high estimation, their *precepts Obeyed*, their *promises Loved*, their *threatnings Feared*; thus step by step, we ascend to the knowledge of future things, and so come to concern our selves, and be conversant about the one thing needful, or thoughts of eternal Weal or Woe; and now every thing of God, heard or seen, hath some sovereign tendency this way; *Sun, Moon, and Stars, Fruits and Plants, Summer and Winter, Night and Day.* Psal 19. *Yea the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy work, day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge, his Law perfect, converting the Soul, his Testimonies sure, making wise the simple*; moreover, by these man is bounded, and understandeth that in *keeping the same, is great reward.*

Thus mans Frailty, and death being understood, *a Resurrection and Judgment believed, a Heaven and*

Hell

Hell in measure comprehended, with desirable delight; an increase of knowledge in these great premises; the Author of them GOD, the way and means of them JESUS CHRIST, is now more and more thirsted after, and this leads to a practical sight of those daily spectacles of Mortality, shutting the door of *Atheism* and *Sense*, keeping open the door of *Faith* and *Hope* in the comfort of its object *Heaven*, and evidence of its *presence*, as not onely certain, but at hand.

I shall now close all with a few short Meditations to all such, as upon the through perusal of this my poor labour, find their hearts so much warmed in the general, as to be affectionately willing for furtherance in their everlasting journey, to accept and practically keep company with these few following Hints.

1. *Be ever learning that* ESSENTIAL (*ever to be learning, but never learnt*) *Lesson*, SELF-DENIAL.

2. *Read much, Meditate more.*

3. PRAY *as to obtain* Life, WATCH *as to avoid* Death.

4. *Be often retired, and there talking with God.*

5. *Trust your own Hearts, as much as you will trust the Devil.*

6. *Avoid the appearance of the least sin, as you would the greatest Poison.*

7. *Live to God a little while, and you shall live with God to all Eternity.*

I shall now break off writing, having cast my poor Mite into Gods publick Treasury, as one list, (if God will,) to encourage the Growing Christian, and reduce the Decaying Christian; if any be bettered by it, I have my end. Give God the Glory; to whom through Jesus Christ by the help of the holy Spirit, be all due praises ascribed in Heart, with Tongue and Conversation for ever and ever. Amen.

THE

THE POSTSCRIPT.

WHereas it is commonly ſaid (and it may be to the prejudice of me in my Credit, Trade, and livelihood) that I have yearly allowance for Preaching, and that my loſſes by ſeveral Impriſonments, and the ſuſpending of my Trade for ſome Moneths, upon the late ſevere Act againſt Meetings, have been made up and repaired by Contribution from others. Theſe are to let all underſtand whom it doth or may any ways concern, that the aforeſaid reports, are againſt all truth and juſtice; For I do here publickly declare, that I never received for Preaching

one

one way or other, to the value of ten Pounds, theſe twenty Years. And that for my ten ſeveral Impriſonments, one of which coſt me Sixſcore and Twelve Pounds, beſides twenty ſix Weeks cloſe confinement from Shop, and Trade, that I never received any thing towards the repair of that loſs more then fourteen Pounds by the hand of a particular Friend. Another time, ſeveral Months extream Sickneſs, occaſioned onely by another reſtraint, which coſt me above fifty Pounds, beſides Keepers Fees, while reduced ſo low by a violent Feaver, as to be diſtracted ſeveral days, and all viſible hope of Life departed, being held in my Bed, by ſtrength of Hands many days. As to my Damages ſuſteined in ſhutting up my Shop ſo many Moneths, upon the aforeſaid account, I openly averr, that I never received any thing of any perſon or perſons towards reparation therein, though I can faithfully affirm, that an hundred Pound would not have done

done it. This Publication I make to this purpose, that such persons as have otherwise conceived and spoken of me, may be undeceived therein, and so Farewell.

FRANCIS SMITH.

June 15. 1672.

FINIS.

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